



Department
for Education

Non-school alternative provision

Voluntary national standards

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Summary

This document sets out the Department for Education (DfE)'s non-statutory standards for non-school alternative provision (also known as unregistered alternative provision).

In its response to its consultation on unregistered alternative provision¹, the government has announced that intends to legislate to introduce mandatory national standards for non-school alternative provision when parliamentary time allows. The standards are intended to inform the local oversight and commissioning of non-school alternative provision; and to set clear and consistent requirements for providers. Until the standards become mandatory, the government and DfE encourages local authorities to adopt them voluntarily to support and improve current practice.

Background

Local authorities and schools can arrange for children of compulsory school age to receive some of their education in settings which are not required to register as schools. These settings are commonly known as non-school (or unregistered) alternative provision because, unlike schools, colleges or accredited online education providers, this type of provision is not subject to a national registration scheme or inspection framework.

Commissioners should ensure that the non-school alternative provision they use meets individual needs and re-engages children in education to support regular attendance in school. However, this fluid and diverse sector, which serves some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children in the education system, requires effective oversight to ensure all providers deliver quality provision that meets each child's educational and individual additional needs.

As responses to the government's [call for evidence](#) and its [consultation](#) on non-school alternative provision demonstrate, many areas already have well-established quality assurance frameworks. In these areas, local authorities, schools and providers work collaboratively to produce approved lists of local non-school alternative provision, which is measured against clear, locally defined standards. These frameworks assist local authorities and schools to meet commissioning responsibilities and enable non-school alternative providers to demonstrate compliance with the standards before their services can be used.

Based on this best practice and on feedback from respondents to the consultation and the call for evidence, DfE has produced a set of voluntary standards to support local areas to quality assure non-school provision, so that they can produce a register of approved providers for use by school and local authority commissioners. The commissioner remains ultimately responsible for the provision they put in place and

¹ [Strengthening protections in non-school alternative provision - GOV.UK](#)

should always conduct their own due diligence to assess whether the provision is suitable for meeting the child's individual needs. Non-school alternative providers may wish to use the standards to self-evaluate their provision and prepare for quality assurance visits.

The standards set out in this document should be read alongside DfE's alternative provision guidance² which explains the powers and duties that apply in relation to alternative provision and sets out the statutory guidance to which the parties specified must have regard.

These standards are intended only for provision that does not meet the criteria for registering as an independent school. Providers and commissioners should be aware that any setting that meets these criteria must be registered with the Secretary of State before it begins to operate. An independent school is defined as any school at which fulltime education is provided for five or more pupils of compulsory school age, or for one or more such pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of special educational needs, or who is looked-after by a local authority, and is not a school maintained by a local authority or a non-maintained special school. An establishment that provides solely for students over compulsory school age does not need to register with the department as an independent school. However, establishments that cater for pupils over the age of 16, as well as those of compulsory school age, and which meet the definition of an independent school, will be required to register and must be registered before admitting pupils.

It is an offence to operate an independent school that is not registered, and anyone who does so is liable, on summary conviction, to a fine and/or imprisonment. More information about the criteria for independent school registration can be found in [DfE's guidance on independent school registration](#). If there is any uncertainty about whether a setting is required to register, the proprietor should seek their own independent legal advice and take any steps needed to comply with the law.

Ofsted is able to investigate unregistered schools and has published [guidance on how to report settings that may be operating illegally](#).

Who this publication is for

These standards are predominantly aimed at non-school settings that provide alternative provision for children of compulsory school age, and which are not already subject to any other national regulation. They will be of interest to:

- local authorities or local bodies that manage and administer quality assurance frameworks for non-school alternative provision

² [Arranging Alternative Provision - guide for LAs and schools](#).

- school and local authority commissioners who arrange placements at non-school alternative provision
- proprietors and staff of non-school alternative provision
- children, their parents, or carers who are placed by schools and local authorities into non-school alternative provision

Local authorities can arrange education otherwise than at a school or college (EOTAS) for a child or young person who requires special educational provision³. By definition, this would be in a non-school setting. As outlined in the consultation response, the government has decided that DfE will look in depth at how EOTAS special educational provision is delivered in non-school alternative provision settings before deciding if and how to regulate the settings. However, commissioners and providers may still find it helpful to apply the voluntary standards to this type of provision in the meantime.

Parents or carers can also arrange education and activities in non-school settings in school hours or out of school hours, typically to supplement elective home education. Local authorities can also arrange alternative provision and special education provision for young people over the age of 16. The voluntary standards are not specifically aimed at settings that exclusively support those groups of children and young people, but the standards may be a useful tool to benchmark performance.

Note on the drafting of this guidance

The guidance is non-statutory and the standards are currently not underpinned by legislation and are voluntary. Where this document says that providers ‘must’ take a course of action, this indicates an existing legal requirement or duty.

This document does not summarise all of the legislation that may apply to non-school alternative provision settings, for example, what they need to abide by to meet company or charity law.

³ Section 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014 says, so far as is relevant here, that a local authority may arrange for any special educational provision that it has decided is necessary for a child for whom it is responsible to be made otherwise than in a school, if it is satisfied that it would be inappropriate for the provision to be made in a school. This is known as ‘education otherwise than in a school’ and is often abbreviated to EOTAS.

Introduction

This document sets out DfE's non-statutory national standards and accompanying guidance for non-school alternative provision. The standards are intended to:

- set clear and consistent expectations for non-school alternative providers
- support commissioners in monitoring children's attendance and progress
- ensure that all children placed in non-school settings are safe and receiving high quality education

The standards cover four themes:

1. safeguarding and the welfare of children
2. health and safety
3. admissions, guidance and support
4. quality of education

The first theme sets out fundamental child safeguarding principles and the second is based around the general health and safety requirements expected of any organisation delivering services to children and supervising them on their premises. Proprietors should approach the standards included in theme 1 and 2 holistically to protect the wellbeing of children in their care. Themes 3 and 4 will help to ensure that all children in non-school alternative provision are receiving a good education and the high-quality support that is appropriate for their needs. Providers meeting the standards in all four themes will help to provide assurance to commissioners that they have created a safe environment which allows children to thrive and achieve positive outcomes.

Non-school alternative providers should produce policies that demonstrate how they will comply with the standards. These policies should be written in plain English, so they are easily understood. They should be made accessible to local authority representatives administering quality assurance frameworks, commissioners, parents and the wider public at all times. If providers do not have a website, the policies will need to be made available on request by other means. We encourage all local authorities, schools and providers to work together to implement and test these standards before they become mandatory. This approach will support local areas to successfully transition to the standards when they become statutory.

Commissioners should support providers to meet the standards, for example by providing relevant information about children, or by signposting providers to high quality training. Commissioners should consider whether other provision is more suitable if providers fail to meet the voluntary standards.

The non-school alternative provision national standards

Part 1: Safeguarding and the welfare of children

When a school places a pupil in alternative provision, the school continues to be responsible for the safeguarding of that pupil. If a child has been placed in non-school alternative provision, the school should obtain written confirmation from the non-school provider that appropriate safeguarding checks have been carried out on individuals working at the setting. This remains the case even if the local authority or local body has quality assured a setting against these standards in order for it to join a local framework. Local authorities should undertake the same safeguarding checks when commissioning alternative provision for children who are not registered in a school.

Providers should ensure that all staff have met safeguarding employment checks and have access to and are supported to implement effective safeguarding policies, including knowing where to seek support when needed, and how to escalate safeguarding concerns that arise. All staff should receive appropriate training, with a named child safeguarding lead identified to pursue concerns and protect children. When a concern does arise, there should be clarity about whether the provider or the commissioner will take forward any necessary action. Either approach is acceptable, as long as a process is clearly agreed and documented at the start of the placement and then reviewed if a change of approach would be in the child's best interest. In many cases the commissioner may be best placed to take forward safeguarding referrals, but in other cases it might be agreed that the provider should take forward the referral because, for example, the setting has built a strong trust with the child. In such cases, this should be done in a timely manner with the commissioner routinely updated.

Providers should record and report all safeguarding incidents. They should also ensure that sites are secure and suitable for children, with risk assessments undertaken when the child's learning takes place in a shared purpose setting, in public, in a private home, in an outdoor environment or the community.

The health and safety standards set out in part 2 build on the safeguarding standards outlined in this section. Providers should implement the standards included in parts 1 and 2 holistically to protect the wellbeing of all children in their care.

1.1 All staff, including proprietors, should undergo recruitment checks including an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) with barred list check where appropriate. Checks should be recorded on a

single central record and persons who fail to meet those checks should not be employed

When recruiting staff, proprietors should ensure that all offers of appointment are conditional and that the following pre-employment checks are completed before a person's appointment to a role. Proprietors should:

- verify the candidate's identity. Further information on how to do this can be found in [how to prove and verify someone's identity](#)
- verify the candidate's mental and physical medical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities
- verify the candidate's professional qualifications, as appropriate (though teaching staff are not required to have qualified teacher status (QTS), proprietors should be satisfied they have necessary qualifications and experience of working with children)
- verify the candidate's right to work in the UK. If there is an uncertainty about whether an individual needs permission to work in the UK, then providers should follow advice on [checking a job applicant's right to work](#)
- verify that the candidate [is not subject to a section 128 direction](#) by the Secretary of State
- verify that the candidate is not working in contravention of a teaching prohibition order (or an interim prohibition order or a direction made under section 142 of the Education Act 2002)

Most staff working in non-school alternative provision settings will likely be undertaking regulated activity with children⁴. Staff undertaking regulated activity will require an enhanced DBS check which includes children's barred list information. An enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information will also be required if a person's role involves managing others who are in regulated activity. For supply or agency staff, the proprietors must obtain evidence that the employment business has undertaken the necessary checks on each named individual. The evidence must be specific to each individual, not simply a general statement that checks have been carried out on staff supplied by the employment business. This includes a suitable DBS certificate which must be no more than three months old, when a person starts work.

Proprietors of non-school alternative provision (including sole traders and tutors) should, where relevant, undertake an enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information to demonstrate that they are not barred from regulated activity with children. They should also be able to show that they are not in contravention of a teaching prohibition order (or an interim prohibition order or a direction made under section 142 of the Education Act 2002). Further information on DBS checks can be found in [this guidance](#).

⁴ [Regulated activity with children in England and Wales - GOV.UK](#)

Providers should maintain a single central record of the above checks made on proprietors, staff, supply staff and any others engaged in regulated activity. This can be kept in paper or electronic form. Appropriate levels of security protection procedures should be in place to safeguard their systems, staff, and children.

1.2 Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children attending the provision

Providers should have policies and procedures in place which allow appropriate and timely actions to be taken to safeguard and promote children's welfare. These policies should be written in plain English so that they can be easily understood, well organised, and reflective of the nature of the provision. The policies should include clear instructions on the actions to be taken and include appropriate contacts for external referrals. Proprietors should ensure that all policies are reviewed annually, and that they are accessible to alternative provision commissioners, parents and the wider public.

All providers should have:

- **a child protection policy** including sections relating to child-on-child abuse, online safeguarding and how to escalate child safeguarding concerns
- **a behaviour policy** for children attending the setting including measures to prevent bullying (such as cyberbullying and prejudice based or discriminatory bullying), and the policy on the use of reasonable force
- **a staff behaviour policy** including processes for dealing with low level concerns, allegations against staff and whistleblowing procedures

To support the development of these policies, providers should refer to the government's statutory guidance on safeguarding children: [Keeping children safe in education](#) and [Working together to safeguard children](#) which provides multi-agency guidance that applies to all organisations and agencies who have functions relating to children.

Providers will probably need to develop other policies to ensure compliance with other relevant legal duties such as, for example, data protection laws. It is important that proprietors are aware that, among other obligations, the [Data Protection Act 2018](#), and the UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR) place duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully and to keep the information they hold safe and secure. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) publishes [guidance for organisations](#) which includes information about the statutory requirements, compliance, protecting personal information, and providing access to official information.

Proprietors can also refer to DfE's [guidance on data protection in schools](#) which is regularly updated. While the document specifically references schools, many of the principles will be applicable to non-school alternative provision.

1.3 Robust procedures are in place outlining how to respond when a safeguarding or welfare concern arises

Providers play a vital role in sharing and contributing to key information about safeguarding. This can include concerns about abuse, neglect, exploitation, and wider social and environmental factors, and about the places, spaces and relationships outside the family home in which harm can occur, including online and extra-familial contexts.

The child protection policy should set out how staff should respond when faced with concerns about a child's welfare. This should include instructions on the processes for sharing all relevant information with the named safeguarding lead immediately upon becoming aware of a concern, so that the safeguarding lead can decide on the next steps.

A provider should then take one or more appropriate actions depending on their assessment of the concerns which factor in any risks that may exist to a child, other children or staff. They should begin by sharing and discussing the concern with the commissioning school's designated safeguarding lead and/or the local authority's commissioning lead. If it is agreed that the setting is best placed to take forward the safeguarding referral, for example, because the provider has built a strong trust with the child, then this should be done in a timely fashion with the commissioner routinely updated. The options should include:

- managing any support for the child internally via their own pastoral support processes
- undertaking an early help assessment with the assistance of the local authority
- making a referral to statutory services (local authority children's social care) if there are concerns about a child's welfare. This should be done immediately if there is a concern that the child is suffering significant harm or is likely to do so. If there are concerns that a child is at immediate risk of harm, it may be appropriate to call the police.

Children, parents or carers, staff or other concerned parties should also be made aware of other routes available, including going to the commissioner or the local authority's children's social care team, if they have reason to believe a concern is not being, or will not be, acted on.

Policies should allow for concerns to be raised anonymously. However, written records must be kept of every concern that has been raised, even when concerns were resolved or no action was taken. All concerns should be shared with school or local authority commissioners, the child's family, and any other appropriate local or national authorities.

Information of a sensitive or personal nature related to these policies such as pupil files, individual risk assessments or complaints should be safe and secure.

1.4 All staff should be familiar with the provider's arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

Providers will need to ensure that all members of staff understand and know how to implement the policies and procedures set out in standard 1.2:

- all permanent staff should be made aware of these arrangements when appointed to their roles
- all permanent staff should be aware of the referrals process including how and when to engage the provider's child safeguarding lead, as set out in standards 1.3 and 1.5
- all permanent staff should undertake child protection training on an annual basis
- there should be a proportionate, risk-based approach to the level of information that is provided to temporary staff, volunteers and contractors.

1.5 Providers should have a named child safeguarding lead who has received appropriate, documented training

Providers should have a named child safeguarding lead to pursue concerns and protect children. The role of the child safeguarding lead can be held by any member of a provider's teaching or leadership staff. The role carries a significant level of responsibility, as they should lead on all safeguarding and child protection duties at the provision.

This includes:

- working with designated safeguarding leads in commissioning schools, and with relevant members in local authority commissioning teams to understand all relevant safeguarding information and if necessary, conduct risk assessments before each child starts their placement
- recording of safeguarding incidents and concerns and sharing these concerns with school or local authority commissioners (and other relevant statutory bodies as necessary) when they arise
- working with the case manager (the person leading any investigations) and the local authority designated officer (LADO) responsible for child safeguarding, where identified
- where a safeguarding concern involves the commissioner, or there is a situation where there is a conflict of interest in reporting the matter to the commissioner or another member of staff, the safeguarding lead should share the concerns with the LADO
- when it is agreed with the commissioner or LADO that it is more appropriate for the setting to take forward safeguarding actions, making referrals to and working in partnership with local safeguarding partners to investigate safeguarding complaints, including complaints involving proprietors and staff
- taking steps to support other staff and advise them on child welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters and ensure that other staff understand the

- arrangements and their role within that. The safeguarding lead will also be responsible for arranging additional training for other staff where necessary
- taking part in discussions and meetings with school and local authority commissioners, local safeguarding partners and other stakeholders and contributing to the assessment of children attending the provision
 - drafting and reviewing the provider's child protection and other safeguarding policies and procedures
 - familiarising themselves with all relevant government guidance on safeguarding children, including the statutory guidance on [Keeping children safe in education](#) and [Working together to safeguard children](#)
 - understanding the risks of extremism and radicalisation and accessing the government's [prevent duty training](#)

The named child safeguarding lead should undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role and should renew their training at least every two years.

It is considered best practice where possible for providers to have a named deputy safeguarding lead to supplement the primary safeguarding lead in case of absence. The deputy safeguarding lead should receive the same training as the primary safeguarding lead.

1.6 Site access should be restricted to children receiving provision, the provider's own staff, and supervised visitors

Non-school alternative provision can take place in a wide variety of settings or environments, including places where children may encounter individuals who are not staff or who have not received any safeguarding checks. As a result, providers should take the following steps.

Where provision takes place at a site or across sites operated exclusively by a provider, access to the site should be restricted to children receiving the provision, the provider's own staff, and supervised visitors. This can be supported by the following measures:

- controlled access to the site(s)
- sign in procedures
- supervision of children at arrival, departure, and social times
- visitors' procedures
- contractors have appropriate checks and/or supervision
- shared site arrangements if appropriate

Where a site is shared with the public, or where the provision takes place outside, in the community (for example, in a library or council office), or at home, risk assessments must be undertaken which consider the needs of individual children, and any local factors relating to the location of the provision. When the provision takes place in a non-secure

environment, except in circumstances where privacy is needed, children should be supervised by a member of staff who has passed all recruitment checks.

Part 2: Health and safety

The standards outlined in part 2 are based around the general health and safety requirements expected of any organisation delivering services to children and supervising them on their premises. These standards are not meant to replace health and safety requirements applicable to them under the relevant legislation but aim to help providers comply with these requirements, and to take steps to identify and address potential hazards that place the health and safety of children at risk in light with applicable health and safety legislation. This should be done through the implementation of effective implementation of health and safety, first aid and fire safety policies.

Proprietors should approach the standards included in parts 1 and 2 holistically to protect the wellbeing and safety of children in their care.

2.1 An appropriate health and safety policy is in place and implemented effectively

Providers must comply with all relevant health and safety legal obligations. To achieve this, they must have a health and safety policy to help them consider and manage any risks in relation to all activities on- or off-site which could place the health and safety of children at risk.

This should include:

- a general statement of the policy
- delegation of tasks: a summary of all staff members with delegated health and safety responsibilities, which should be updated whenever there are changes to the responsibilities
- arrangements for risk assessments, including:
 - environmental or site assessments
 - assessment of specialist equipment
- assessments relating to individual children with additional needs, lone working arrangements, and individual activities that are carried out by children
- arrangements to support children with medical conditions including the administration of medicines
- practical control measures to reduce risk
- the process for recording and reporting injuries or accidents
- the process for establishing, monitoring and reviewing its policies and procedures to ensure they meet established and revised health and safety requirements

The health and safety policy should also include consideration of children's individual health needs. If a child requires supervision when taking medication while attending a setting, the commissioning agreement and individual healthcare plan should include written permission from their parents or carers and their headteacher or local authority officer for their medication to be administered by a member of staff, or self-administered

by the child. Providers may wish to refer to government guidance regarding supporting children with medical conditions: [Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#).

In developing a health and safety policy, providers might want to review DfE's guidance for schools: [Health and safety: responsibilities and duties for schools - GOV.UK](#).

In addition, the Health and Safety Executive⁵ (HSE) has a web resource for education providers which may help proprietors of non-school alternative provision setting to create policies. [Education: health and safety in schools, further and higher education \(hse.gov.uk\)](#); and a directory of industry-specific health and safety regulations [HSE: Guidance: Industries](#).

Effective implementation of a health and safety policy involves proactively identifying potential health and safety risks and taking swift, preventative measures to address them in accordance with the policy. To support effective implementation, providers must ensure that staff receive information, instruction, and training about health and safety. This should include:

- how to assess risks specific for their job. Risk assessments should be undertaken by staff members with sufficient training, experience or knowledge. Providers have a duty to assess risk, but all staff members should be consulted about risks which affect them
- meeting their roles and responsibilities identified within the health and safety policy

Providers can do this in different ways depending on individual or specific need relative to their setting. For example, providing staff with written guidance may be appropriate in some cases, while attending a training course may be more appropriate in others.

Staff whose work involves a greater element of risk will need extra or specific training. The [HSE risk management guidance](#) provides information about when staff require specific training in, for example, using industrial machinery or having responsibility for the storage of and accountability for potentially hazardous materials in their buildings.

2.2 First aid equipment and/or facilities are readily available and there are arrangements for access to a qualified first aider

Providers should ensure that first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by suitably trained staff. This should be assisted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written first aid policy.

To support this, providers should have, on each site:

- a designated, qualified first aider(s) to take charge of first aid arrangements

⁵ [HSE: Information about health and safety at work](#)

- a suitable first aid container stocked in accordance with the findings of the first aid needs assessment and holding at least the [minimum requirements](#) suggested by HSE
- information for staff detailing the location of equipment, facilities, and personnel

To qualify as a first aider, an individual should undergo appropriate training delivered by a competent training provider and hold a valid first aid certificate.

Some provision may take place in the community (for example in a library or council office), or in a family home or another private residence. In such instances, the provider's first aid needs assessment may identify that a designated first aider is not required. In these circumstances, the provider should agree with the host on a designated person with responsibility for any first aid arrangements, including calling the emergency services, when required. Arrangements should be made for the designated person to be available to undertake these duties at all times. [HSE first aid at work](#) guidance is available.

In developing an approach to first aid, providers may want to refer to DfE's [guidance on first aid in schools](#).

2.3 A system should be in place and in use for recording and reporting health and safety and first aid incidents

The reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences regulations (RIDDOR⁶) require that all workplaces, including providers of non-school alternative provision, must record and report certain work-related injuries incurred by a child or a member of staff.

HSE explain when, how, and where to report incidents in their education information sheet: [incident reporting in schools](#). While the document specifically references schools, the information is applicable to non-school alternative provision settings.

Providers should keep a written record of all incidents and report them to relevant parties or authorities. Minor incidents should be reported to commissioners and parents, but significant or major incidents or emergencies should also be reported to HSE.

Where an incident takes place in the home or in the community, providers should make an assessment of the safety of the child and update the risk assessment if required (for example by making changes to travel arrangements).

⁶ [The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013](#)

2.4 All specialist equipment used by the provider should have undergone relevant inspection and safety checks consistent with industry standards

Providers should ensure that any specialist equipment is safe when children are using it, or if they are present when others are using it.

Competent staff with the appropriate qualifications, skills or training should carry out regular inspections of this equipment, in line with the provider's own risk assessments and in accordance with industry standards.

Providers may also wish to refer to HSE's guidance on [risk assessments](#); its [industry specific](#) guidance; and its guidance on [equipment and machinery](#).

2.5 Staff should hold appropriate qualifications and be suitably trained in the use of specialised equipment

All staff who are responsible for instructing or supervising children should possess appropriate qualifications, training, and experience in operating any specialist equipment. The training and experience should include supervising or instructing children in the use of this equipment where appropriate.

2.6 An appropriate fire safety policy should be in place

The government has produced guidance for all employers, head teachers, governors, vice-chancellors, occupiers, and owners of premises where the main use of the building (or part of the building) is for educational purposes. DfE's guidance on [fire safety risk assessments in educational premises](#) sets out the key requirements that providers must meet. While not specified by name, non-school alternative provision settings must comply with these requirements.

As set out in the guidance providers should:

- ensure procedures are in place to reduce the likelihood of fire
- maintain fire detection and alarm systems
- ensure that staff and children are familiar with the emergency evacuation procedures

If the provision is taking place in a public place (for example, a library or council office), the provider should ensure that a fire safety management policy and evacuation plan is included in the health and safety policy of the organisation hosting the activity⁷. In addition, providers must:

⁷ [The Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)

- undertake a fire risk assessment (as outlined in government guidance on [what a fire risk assessment should cover](#))
- consider the needs of all individuals who may be at risk
- reduce the risk of fire as much as is reasonably possible
- provide general fire precautions to mitigate against any possible risks
- take further measures to make sure there is adequate protection when using or storing flammable or explosive materials
- create an evacuation plan, tailored to the premises, to respond to any emergencies (including clearly marked escape routes and exits, and a safe meeting point)
- ensure that all fire-risk assessment findings are recorded and retained

Children should be familiarised with the fire safety plan through planned evacuation drills and staff should consider whether individual risk assessments are required for children with individual needs.

The fire risk assessment must be kept up to date and should be reviewed whenever a change at the setting may require a new assessment. Changes may include, for example, increased numbers of staff or children, admission of children with specific needs, or changes in the design of the premises in which the provision takes place.

Part 3: Admissions, support and guidance

All children, regardless of their circumstances or the type of educational settings they attend, should expect to receive the same high standards of education and support. For those in alternative provision, including non-school settings, commissioners should ensure that placements address the individual needs of the child as well as providing education in line with that of their home school to better enable re-integration. Parents also have an important role to play throughout the planning and commissioning of the child's placement and can provide necessary information about the child and their needs. Parents should always be consulted before any new provision, including in non-school settings, begins.

The standards in parts 3 and 4 should help to ensure that providers are able to meet these expectations. Providers should ensure that commissioners are provided with all information needed to determine whether a placement will be suitable. This should begin with clear and well supported admissions and referral policies which include a clear description of the provider's offer, and of the provider's process for assessing whether admission to the setting would meet the child's needs.

To help determine, develop, and agree the package of support required, providers should:

- work with children and their parents to help them to understand the purpose of their placement, and to help with the recording and reporting of key information around attendance and behaviour
- work with commissioners to request and maintain records on the individual needs of each child on admission
- continue to work with commissioners after admission to regularly assess progress on attendance and behaviour, and act on that information appropriately to support children in meeting their educational and welfare outcomes
- where appropriate, agree a target with children, their parents and commissioners for re-integration into full time education in a school

Providers and commissioners should consider what additional support is required if a child is not making expected progress. If the commissioner does not believe that sufficient progress is being made, for example if regular attendance cannot be secured, the commissioner should consider terminating the placement and putting in place more suitable provision.

3.1 Admissions policies and referral processes should be clearly documented and well supported

Providers should have fair, clear and transparent admissions policies and referral processes in place. They should include an overview of the provision, its aims and objectives, examples of the education provision or support being offered and other

information relevant to deciding whether settings are suitable to children's individual needs. Parents and commissioners should be provided with a named contact in the setting to support the admissions process.

While providers have autonomy over their own admissions arrangements, they must not, under the Equality Act 2010⁸, discriminate on the grounds of disability or other criteria such as race, religion, or gender. Admissions policies must consider reasonable adjustments for children with disabilities.

3.2 Providers should maintain records, including information supplied by commissioners, for all children placed in their settings

Providers should work with commissioners to ensure that both parties have access to key relevant information to help understand and meet children's needs. Information sharing will help commissioners and providers to work together to agree on the support needed, and on arrangements when concerns arise, for example around safeguarding or attendance. The relevant information that should be provided by commissioners when placements commence includes:

- emergency contact details
- previous school admissions and attendance history
- academic performance reports
- personal education plans, EHC plans, individual healthcare plans, or other learning plans
- records of additional health needs
- any records relating to exclusions, including behaviour reports and risk assessments
- any information pertinent to child safeguarding

3.3 Providers should have an induction process to help children to understand the intended outcomes of their placements and their setting's safeguarding and health and safety policies

All non-school alternative provision settings should be inclusive and welcoming, so that children feel welcome and supported when starting their placements. They should also know what they should do if they have any concerns or do not feel safe, and understand how the placement will help their learning journey, and the learning outcomes they will be expected to achieve.

All providers should have an induction process, which should be outlined in a written integration or induction policy, and which should be shared with children. Providers

⁸ [Equality Act 2010](#)

should use this as a means of building on the information provided by commissioners and to gain further understanding of children's individual education and welfare needs. To support this, setting staff should conduct and produce:

- baseline evaluations, including those to understand children's individual needs
- individual learning plans which should include timetables together with attendance and behaviour expectations
- a risk assessment if the information from placement commissioners identifies significant safeguarding concerns

Providers should ensure that commissioners and parents or carers also receive information about the induction process and the child's educational offer so they can support children's learning.

3.4 Providers should record children's attendance for each session and share information promptly with commissioners. Processes should be in place for checking on the health and welfare of absent children, and to agree strategies to improve attendance

Providers should record attendance or absence for each session and report that information to the commissioners as soon as is possible, ideally within 30 minutes of the start of the session. Recording and reviewing attendance data can help shape the setting's strategy for supporting children's regular attendance. Timely sharing of information also supports school commissioners to fulfil their legal duties in completing school attendance registers.

Absences should be followed up urgently to ascertain the reason, identify whether the absence is approved or not and where necessary ensure proper safeguarding action is taken. Providers should have agreements in place with commissioners to decide who is best placed to take forward any actions.

When it has been agreed that a provider follows up an absence, it should contact the child's parents or carers and where necessary and if agreed with the commissioner, other professionals who are working with the child and their family, to understand why and when the child will return. Providers should also collaborate with the commissioner, the child and their parents to ensure that any provider level barriers to non-attendance are addressed. Where any barriers fall outside of the provider's control, all partners should work together to support the child and their parents to access any support they may need.

Providers should exchange information with commissioners to inform and support the respective settings' attendance management approach. Attendance should be discussed with commissioners at least every six weeks, and if required, different levels or types of support proposed.

3.5 All providers should have a strategy to support good behaviour for learning, to record children's behaviour and progress, and to share information about behaviour routinely with commissioners and parents

As specified in standard 1.2, all providers should have a behaviour policy. Staff should put their policy into practice from day to day and in a consistent manner. Support should be provided to all learners to help them meet behaviour expectations, with reasonable adjustments and adaptations in place for children who have specific identified needs.

Staff should be provided with regular training to enable the management of children's behaviour, including de-escalation of confrontations or potentially challenging behaviour, and the avoidance of physical restraint and other restrictive interventions.

Providers should maintain up to date records of children's behaviour. Significant behaviour incidents should be reported to commissioners and parents promptly, ideally on the same day that incidents take place. Where plans are in place to address behavioural concerns, progress should be reviewed with the commissioner at least every six weeks, and if required, different levels or types of support proposed.

Part 4: Quality of education

Providers should constantly monitor and review children's learning progress. They should supply regular feedback to commissioners, parents, and children, and put in place strategies and interventions to make improvements when progress is not on track. They should also ensure that they receive user feedback and reflect on their own performance to best ensure they can deliver high quality education in a safe environment for all children attending their settings.

If at any time throughout the placement a child is not making expected progress, then the setting should raise any potential under-performance with the commissioner at the earliest opportunity and if necessary, organise an early review of the placement to address the issues and identify whether additional or different support is needed. If, after the review, sufficient progress in learning is still not being made, the commissioner should consider terminating the placement.

4.1 Teaching staff and instructors should have the appropriate skills, knowledge and qualifications to deliver programmes

Teachers in non-school alternative provision are not required to have qualified teacher status (QTS) or any particular subject qualifications. However, providers should ensure that teaching staff and instructors should have a good understanding, skills and knowledge of the subject(s) they are delivering.

4.2 Planning for learning shows lesson/session plans identify the knowledge, skills and understanding that all children attending their settings will aim to achieve

Providers should draw up and maintain curriculum documentation covering the following areas:

- the setting's overall approach to its curriculum (i.e. the programmes it delivers)
- proposals for how that written policy on curriculum will be implemented ('plans')
- detailed specifications of what programmes are delivered to children ('schemes of work') and how this should be shared with schools; and
- intended outcomes of the curriculum e.g. external qualifications, regulation strategies

The curriculum should be relevant to the age, aptitude and individual needs of all children placed within non-school alternative provision settings, including those with SEND. Providers should be aware of any adaptations or additional needs when planning the curriculum and the sequence of learning, and adapt the approach based on these needs. Where providers offer qualifications or other accreditations they should provide commissioners with details of compliance with awarding bodies in terms of staff training, record keeping or exams.

Providers should ensure their programmes allow children to develop speaking and listening skills. In cases where providers are delivering all of a child's education, they should ensure that the child is able to develop their literacy and numeracy when attending the provision.

4.3 There is a clear process for setting targets and monitoring learning progress, supporting re-integration and transition where appropriate, and for taking actions if progress is not on track

Providers should record and assess a child's individual learning performance so they can track the child's progress against their planned learning outcomes and targets (as established during the induction process outlines in standard 3.3). This information should be used to direct teaching and instruction.

Assessments of children's progress should be easily understood by commissioners and reviewed at least every six weeks. Providers should also provide regular updates to parents and carers.

If at any time throughout the placement, a child is not making the expected progress, the setting should raise any potential under performance at the earliest opportunity with the commissioner. If necessary, an early review of the placement can be organised to address the issues and identify whether more or different support is needed.

4.4 Providers should have processes in place to self-evaluate whether they are effective in delivering the commissioned services

Providers are responsible for demonstrating that they can offer and deliver good educational provision and support for children.

To help ensure this, providers should continuously evaluate their own practices so that they can be confident their setting continues to be high quality and support the needs of children and commissioners.

There is no set way of doing this. However, providers can demonstrate their commitment to best practice through the following:

- internal improvement and development plans
- self-assessment of staff and child progress
- child, parent or carer, commissioner feedback, including satisfaction surveys
- up to date audit reports and annual accounts
- actions taken in response to local area quality assurance visits

Annex A: The non-school alternative provision national standards

Part 1: Safeguarding and the welfare of children

1.1	All staff, including proprietors, should undergo recruitment checks including an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) with barred list check where appropriate. Checks should be recorded on a single central record and persons who fail to meet those checks should not be employed
1.2	Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children attending the provision
1.3	Robust procedures are in place outlining how to respond when a safeguarding or welfare concern arises
1.4	All staff should be familiar with the provider's arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
1.5	Providers should have a named child safeguarding lead who has received appropriate, documented training
1.6	Site access should be restricted to children receiving provision, the provider's own staff, and supervised visitors

Part 2: Health and safety

2.1	An appropriate health and safety policy is in place and implemented effectively
2.2	First aid equipment and/or facilities are readily available and there are arrangements for access to a qualified first aider
2.3	A system should be in place and in use for recording and reporting health and safety and first aid incidents
2.4	All specialist equipment used by the provider should have undergone relevant inspection and safety checks consistent with industry standards
2.5	Staff should hold appropriate qualifications and be suitably trained in the use of specialised equipment
2.6	An appropriate fire safety policy should be in place

Part 3: Admissions, support and guidance

3.1	Admissions policies and referral processes should be clearly documented and well supported
3.2	Providers should maintain records, including information supplied by commissioners, for all children placed in their settings
3.3	Providers should have an induction process to help children to understand the intended outcomes of their placements and their setting's safeguarding and health and safety policies

3.4	Providers should record children's attendance for each session and share information promptly with commissioners. Processes should be in place for checking on the health and welfare of absent children, and to agree strategies to improve attendance
3.5	All providers should have a strategy to support good behaviour for learning, to record children's behaviour and progress, and to share information about behaviour routinely with commissioners and parents

Part 4: Quality of education

4.1	Teaching staff and instructors should have the appropriate skills, knowledge and qualifications to deliver programmes
4.2	Planning for learning shows lesson/session plans identify the knowledge, skills and understanding that all children attending their settings will aim to achieve
4.3	There is a clear process for setting targets and monitoring learning progress, supporting re-integration and transition where appropriate, and for taking actions if progress is not on track
4.4	Providers should have processes in place to self-evaluate whether they are effective in delivering the commissioned services

Annex B: Further resources

Further resources on alternative provision and non-school alternative provision

- [Alternative provision statutory guidance](#)
- [Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school](#)
- [DfE consultation on strengthening protections in unregistered alternative provision](#)

Other relevant departmental statutory guidance and advice

- [Keeping children safe in education](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children](#)
- [Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#)
- [Health and safety: responsibilities and duties for schools](#)
- [DfE advice on preventing bullying](#)
- [First Aid in schools](#)
- [Ensuring good behaviour in schools](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Fire safety in new and existing school buildings](#)
- [Fire safety risk assessments in educational premises](#)
- [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#)

Other departmental and wider government resources

- [Independent school registration guidance](#)
- [How to prove and verify someone's identity](#)
- [Checking a job applicant's right to work](#)
- [Individuals prohibited from managing or governing schools](#)
- [Regulated activity with children in England and Wales](#)
- [A Quick Guide to DBS Checks](#)
- [Prevent duty training](#)
- [The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013](#)
- [Fire safety in the workplace: Fire risk assessments](#)
- [The Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [Data protection in schools](#)

Useful resources and external organisations

- [Ofsted inspections of independent schools - resources](#)
- [Government Equalities Office](#)

- Health and Safety Executive – [Information about health and safety at work](#)
- Health and Safety Executive - [Education: health and safety in schools, further and higher education](#)
- Health and Safety Executive - [HSE: Guidance: Industries](#)
- Health and Safety Executive - [Managing risks and risk assessment at work](#)
- Health and Safety Executive – [Minimum requirements and resources for first aid](#)
- Health and Safety Executive – [Incident reporting in schools](#)



Department
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