# Alternative Provision: Quality Assurance Checklist

From time to time, it will be appropriate for schools to use alternative provision for some of their students. The reasons for this will vary; schools will often use alternative provision to enable pupils to access a more vocational curriculum than they would otherwise be able to in a mainstream setting, 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 are dual-registered (i.e. on the roll of both the referring school and that of the alternative provision).

* What Ofsted Look For

Inspectors will look at how well a school supports any pupils who are attending off-site or alternative provision. They will need to be satisfied that these pupils are safe and are having their needs met effectively.

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 students 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.

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 students 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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulating-independent-schools)

[Unregistered independent schools and out of school settings - Advice](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/690495/La_Guidance_March_2018.pdf)

**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.

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| **Leadership and Management of the Provision** | | | |
| **Area to be checked** | **Y/N** | **Evidence seen by school and**  **additional details** | **Checked by**  **(person and date)** |
| Does the provision meet the definition of an independent school?  Has it been registered? |  |  |  |
| Does the provision meet the independent school standards? |  |  |  |
| If the provision has been inspected by Ofsted (or, where relevant, the Independent Schools Inspectorate), is the school satisfied with the outcome of the last inspection? |  |  |  |
| Does the provider have adequate levels of public liability insurance? |  |  |  |
| Does the provider have adequate levels of employers’ liability insurance? |  |  |  |
| Does the provider have adequate levels of professional indemnity insurance? |  |  |  |
| If relevant, does the insurance cover any subcontractors or external partners who may work with the pupils? |  |  |  |
| Where pupils will be using transport, is there insurance cover for this? |  |  |  |

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| **Safeguarding** | | | | |
| **Area to be checked** | **Y/N** | **Evidence seen by school and**  **additional details** | **Checked by**  **(person and date)** | |
| Does the provision have a Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy? Has this been shared with the school? |  |  |  | |
| Does the provision have a single central record and is this kept up to date? |  |  |  | |
| Are all staff and volunteers checked for their suitability to work with children through the use of recruitment and vetting checks? |  |  |  | |
| Is there a policy in place for managing allegations against staff? |  |  |  | |
| 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 (KCSIE)? |  |  |  | |
| Where there are safeguarding concerns regarding an individual pupil, is this information shared with the referring school? |  |  |  | |
| Have staff at the alternative provision accessed appropriate safeguarding training? |  |  |  | |
| Is there an Anti-Bullying Policy in place? Does the setting manage any instances of bullying effectively? |  |  |  | |
| **Health and Safety** | | | |
| **Area to be checked** | **Y/N** | **Evidence seen by school and**  **additional details** | **Checked by**  **(person and date)** |
| Does the alternative provision carry out risk assessments where needed? Are copies of these available for the school to see? |  |  |  |
| Is there an up-to-date Health and Safety Policy in place? |  |  |  |
| Are regular checks carried out to ensure that the premises are safe and buildings are well maintained? |  |  |  |
| Does the provider carry out all the required/recommended health and safety checks (e.g. electrical testing, legionella, fire safety)? |  |  |  |
| 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)? |  |  |  |
| Are there sufficient numbers with up-to-date first-aid training? |  |  |  |
| Does the setting offer adequate supervision for pupils? |  |  |  |

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| **Quality of Education** | | | |
| **Area to be checked** | **Y/N** | **Evidence seen by school and**  **additional details** | **Checked by**  **(person and date)** |
| Is the curriculum on offer suitable for the pupils that have been referred? |  |  |  |
| Will pupils be accessing a broad and balanced curriculum that keeps future options open to them? |  |  |  |
| Does the alternative provision have its own systems in place to quality assure the education on offer? |  |  |  |
| Does the school carry out regular assessments/progress reviews to ensure that pupils are making acceptable progress? |  |  |  |
| Are the outcomes of these assessments/progress reviews shared with the school? |  |  |  |
| Does the alternative provision support the personal development of pupils? |  |  |  |
| Does the setting have adequate resources and facilities to provide a high-quality education? |  |  |  |
| Does the provider offer appropriate qualifications and routes into further education and training? |  |  |  |

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| **Behaviour** | | | |
| **Area to be checked** | **Y/N** | **Evidence seen by school and**  **additional details** | **Checked by**  **(person and date)** |
| Does the provision have an effective policy for managing pupil behaviour? |  |  |  |
| Does the school support any rewards and sanctions that are likely to be implemented by the provision? |  |  |  |
| Does the provision have an Exclusions Policy? |  |  |  |
| In the event of a pupil being excluded, is it clear where responsibility lies for ensuring that they continue to access education? |  |  |  |
| Are there effective systems in place for the provider to report any behaviour issues to the school? |  |  |  |
| Does the provider have systems in place to deal with poor attendance? |  |  |  |

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| **Support for Students** | | | |
| **Area to be checked** | **Y/N** | **Evidence seen by school and**  **additional details** | **Checked by**  **(person and date)** |
| Are students provided with careers information, advice and guidance? |  |  |  |
| Where relevant, does the alternative provision work with external agencies to support pupils with specific needs? |  |  |  |
| Where pupils have specific SEND needs, is there an individual plan in place? |  |  |  |
| Does the provision have its own SENDCo? If not, how will specialist support be coordinated for pupils with SEND? |  |  |  |
| Are pupils given a thorough induction to ensure that they know the rules and are aware of how to keep themselves safe? |  |  |  |

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| **Communication** | | | |
| **Area to be checked** | **Y/N** | **Evidence seen by school and**  **additional details** | **Checked by**  **(person and date)** |
| Does the alternative provision share information and data about each pupil’s progress regularly? |  |  |  |
| Will the provider meet with the school regularly to discuss individual pupils? |  |  |  |
| Does the provider have policies and procedures for communicating effectively with parents/carers? |  |  |  |
| Will the setting provide regular attendance information to the school? |  |  |  |
| Are there systems in place to allow effective communication with parents/carers? |  |  |  |

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| **Other** | | | |
| **Area to be checked** | **Y/N** | **Evidence seen by school and**  **additional details** | **Checked by**  **(person and date)** |
| Does the provider have a Data Protection Policy? |  |  |  |
| Is there a service level agreement in place, setting out the services that the alternative provision agrees to provide? |  |  |  |
| Does the alternative provision meet any additional requirements that have been specified by the Local Authority or Academy Trust? |  |  |  |
| Is there a Complaints Policy? Is there a system in place to ensure that the referring school is made aware of any complaints involving their pupils? |  |  |  |

**Further Reading**

[Alternative provision](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision)

[The Independent School Standards - Guidance for independent schools](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/800615/Independent_School_Standards-_Guidance_070519.pdf)