



ALTERNATIVE PROVISION GUIDANCE

**London Borough of Hillingdon
2026**

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ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

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1. Introduction: What is Alternative Provision?

1.1 The definition provided by the Department for Education (DfE) for Alternative Provision is: 'education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour'. This is the definition which Hillingdon adopts.

1.2 For additional context, Ofsted defines alternative provision as 'something in which a pupil participates as part of their regular timetable, away from the site of the school or the pupil referral unit where they are enrolled and not led by school staff'.

1.3 The needs of most children can be met through mainstream provision, with a small proportion with the most complex needs requiring specialist support. This enables them to progress in their learning, going onto their next step towards a settled adulthood. Some children, however, need education or training arranged outside a mainstream or specialist setting because otherwise they would not receive suitable education or training. This can be for a number of reasons:

- Pupils who are permanently excluded
- Children who have medical and mental health needs
- Pupils at risk of suspension, on a fixed period suspension or directed by schools to off-site provision to support behavioural and emotional challenges
- Children and young people 16 – 25 with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or other vulnerabilities needing additional support to progress to a settled adulthood
- Children unable to cope with a full-time curriculum, missing out on education or who find themselves marginalised from mainstream schools because of behavioural or other challenges

1.4 Context to the guidance:

- The Council's mission: Our ambition is to support all children to achieve well in education, with opportunities for learning at all ages. Underpinning this objective are principles of early help, personalisation and inclusion.
- We seek to reduce permanent exclusions and reduce the number of children who need to access unregistered Alternative Provision, with particular emphasis on those who are either at a primary key stage and those at the end of their secondary key stages of education.

1.5 Important information which underpins this guidance:

National

- [Statutory guidance: alternative provision](#)
- [Unregistered independent schools and out of school settings](#)
- [Guidance on children with health needs who cannot attend school](#)
- [Government advice and guidance for independent school registration](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education 2025 - statutory guidance](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026](#)

Hillingdon Council

- [SEND and AP Strategy 2023-28](#)
- [Hillingdon Virtual School Handbook](#)
- [Hillingdon's policy for the alternative education arrangements of children who miss school due to health reasons](#)
- [Hillingdon's Exclusions and Suspensions guidance 2024/25](#)
- [Hillingdon's Policy Statement: Education under Section 19](#)

2. Types of Alternative Provision

2.1 Alternative Provision can take many different forms, depending on the individual needs of the child. It is important the school or Local Authority service commissioning the provision is clear on whether the provision is a registered school with a DfE number, or an unregistered setting as this will have considerations regarding how many hours a pupil can access the provision. In all cases, the provision should be both efficient in its delivery of education and suitable to the child's age, ability, and aptitude; and to any special educational needs they may have.

2.2 Unregistered provisions have no regulatory body in which to inspect standards, safety, or welfare. Some will be registered as a charity. Many are privately-run profit-making businesses or franchises.

Unregistered provisions are usually a supplement to a child's education and should not provide all or substantially all of a child's education.

2.3 Examples of registered Alternative Provision:

2.3a Alternative Provision (AP) Academies and AP Free Schools: These schools support learners who have additional needs or have been excluded from mainstream education. AP Academies and AP Free Schools provide education and intervention for children who are unable for various reasons, to access a mainstream school full time. Most commonly children attend for support with barriers that are being experienced within their mainstream school, following a permanent exclusion, or to prevent permanent exclusion.

2.3b Pupil Referral Unit (PRU): PRUs are a type of school specifically set up to provide education for children as an alternative to attending a mainstream or special maintained school or academy. Pupils are often referred to a PRU if they need a higher level of support than a mainstream school can provide. They are often called 'Short-stay schools' as a child's placement there is not permanent.

Some pupils will have all their lessons at a PRU, while others split their time between the mainstream school where they are registered and a PRU. Hillingdon does not have a PRU.

2.3c Alternative Provision Units: Some schools have AP units. An increasing number of schools are developing in-house AP or inclusion provision with a view to being able to better meet the needs of pupils and reducing the need to send pupils off site. These units may focus on delivering an alternative curriculum as a supplement to the normal offer (such as vocational subjects) or an alternative unit focussing on therapeutic teaching strategies through specialist staff for children with social, emotional, and mental health needs. The focus is often to provide preventative strategies to avoid exclusion and increase access to education.

2.3d Further Education Colleges and Sixth Form Centres: Where provisions are registered to deliver alternative provision for 14 to 16-year-olds, this can be a helpful alternative for some pupils.

Provision is usually on the same site as older students but delivered through a bespoke programme for just the 14-16 cohort. These provisions can usually offer a wider range of vocational subjects than the typical GCSE curriculum from mainstream schools. Commissioners should check if provisions are registered to offer provision before commissioning.

2.3e Virtual Live Remote Learning Platforms: Although not a provision, it may form part of an alternative curriculum offer provided and delivered by the child's school. It is most effective when broadcast live into an alternative venue to the classroom, such as

the child's home or hospital through a device. It is provided when a child is unable to attend school due to ill health, specific risk management or other reason to maintain a child's learning when they are unable to attend school. Many schools developed the ability to deliver live lessons due to school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.4 Examples of unregistered or unregulated Alternative Provision:

2.4a Unaccredited Online learning: This can offer a solution where there are significant barriers to a child physically attending a school. This is for learners who cannot attend mainstream school due to a range of conditions including medical and other health issues. There is no requirement that ensures all teaching is delivered by qualified teachers. Checks should be undertaken to ensure that those persons communicating directly with children have the sufficient enhanced Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks in place.

2.4b Alternative Provision Centres: These centres differ greatly in their offer to children. Some will focus on vocational learning styles. Others provide practical learning opportunities focussing on functional skills or therapeutic deliveries, often not confined to the typical style of classroom delivery. As with online learning, there is no regulatory body overseeing the safety and performance of such provisions and neither is there a guarantee that providers are trained on the provision offer they are providing.

2.4c Faith Based Alternative Provision: This provision will centre most or all its provision on religious teaching in accordance with the provision's faith. In addition to religious teaching, the provision may offer other activities, clubs and learning opportunities.

2.4d Tuition Centres: These are most accessed by parents to subsidise their child's school education and mostly occur outside of usual school hours. In addition, some offer a part time tuition offer to schools or home educating parents during the school day, to complement their educational offer.

2.4e Personal Tutors: These are mostly commissioned by parents, and similar to tuition centres. There is however a small number of scenarios whereby the local authority or school may commission a tutor or tutoring service to provide a suitable education. In these situations, the alternative provision should be a short-term intervention and appropriate quality assurances carried out by the commissioner.

3. Registration

3.1 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.

3.2 There is no legal definition of what constitutes 'full-time' education. However, the DfE would consider an institution to be providing full-time education if it is intended to provide, or does provide, all, or substantially all, of a child's education. A provision must register, as an independent school where it provides full time education for:

- 5 or more pupils of compulsory school age
- 1 or more pupils of compulsory school age with an education, health, and care (EHC) plan
- 1 or more pupils of compulsory school age who are looked after by the local authority

Definition of full-time education:

3.3 The DfE and Ofsted consider any institution that is operating during the day, for more than 18 hours per week, to be providing full-time education. This is because the education being provided takes up the substantial part of the week in which it can be reasonably expected a child can be educated and therefore indicates that the education provided is the main source of education for that child.

3.4 Relevant factors in determining whether education is full-time include:

- the number of hours per week that is provided - including breaks and independent study time;
- the number of weeks in the academic term/year the education is provided;
- the time of day it is provided;
- whether the education provision in practice precludes the possibility that full-time education could be provided elsewhere.

3.5 Schools and services considering commissioning alternative provision should remember that children should receive the same amount of education as they would receive in a maintained school. Therefore, if a child is accessing an unregistered provision, they can only attend part time, and the school or service will need to ensure that most of their education is provided through a registered provider or by attending school for at least half of the week.

4. What is 'good' Alternative Provision

4.1 Before considering alternative provision for a child, schools and local authorities need to ensure both the quality of education and the safety of pupils within a setting. The DfE describes good alternative provision as: 'that which appropriately meets the needs of pupils and enables them to achieve good educational attainment on par with their mainstream peers. All pupils must receive a good education, regardless of their circumstances or the settings in which they find themselves.

4.2 Provision will differ from pupil to pupil, but there are some common elements that alternative provision should aim to achieve, including:

- good academic attainment on par with mainstream schools, particularly in English, mathematics, and science (including IT), with appropriate accreditation and qualifications;
- that the specific personal, social, and academic needs of pupils are properly identified and met to help them to overcome any barriers to attainment;
- improved pupil motivation and self-confidence, attendance, and engagement with education; and clearly defined objectives, including the next steps following the placement such as reintegration into mainstream education, further education, training or employment'

4.3 The DfE identifies that a good provision should:

- have a clear purpose with a focus on education and achievement as well as meeting the pupil's needs and rigorous assessment of progress;
- offer appropriate and challenging teaching in English, mathematics, and science (including IT) on par with mainstream education – unless this is being provided elsewhere within a package of provision;
- be suited to the pupil's capabilities, give pupils the opportunity to take appropriate qualifications and involve suitably qualified staff who can help pupils make excellent progress; and have good arrangements for working with other relevant services such as social care, educational psychology, child and adolescent mental health services, youth offending teams and drug support services etc.

4.4 Alternative provision should be good quality, registered where appropriate, and delivered by high quality staff with suitable training, experience, and safeguarding checks. It should have clearly defined objectives relating to personal and academic attainment. Where an intervention is part-time or temporary, to help minimise disruption to a pupil's education, it should complement and keep up with the pupil's current curriculum, timetable, and qualification route.

4.5 Ofsted inspectors will look at how well the commissioner supports any pupils who are attending an alternative provision. They will need to be satisfied that these pupils are safe and are having their needs met effectively.

4.6 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 commissioner has quality assured the education on offer;

- the commissioner'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 commissioner;
- 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.

5. Who can commission Alternative Provision

Schools

5.1 The general principle is that children should be educated in a mainstream setting unless that would not provide them with a suitable education. There will be occasions where a mainstream school is not reasonably able to provide suitable education for a child and an alternative provision would be in the child's best interests. For example, where a child is at risk of permanent exclusion, where pupils have medical needs that mean they are unable to attend a mainstream school full-time, or where a child would make better progress and gain greater accreditation if they were to access vocational training.

5.2 Although parents and services cannot demand a school commissions alternative provision, the school should fully consider the request and whether alternative provision would be in the best interests of the child. The decision to commission alternative provision lies at the discretion of the Head Teacher, unless commissioned by one of the teams set out below.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Team

5.3 There will be some instances whereby the EHCP team need to consider the use of an alternative provision for a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). These largely fall into two categories:

- A need for interim education due to lack of capacity in a school to meet a child's specific needs
- Parental or young person's preference for Education other than at School (EOTAS).

Virtual School

5.4 On occasion, the Virtual School may commission an alternative provision. The reasons for this are usually either due to the lack of school places, lack of suitable provision in relation to the child's specific needs, or other exceptional circumstances.

5.5 Further information about the Virtual School's use of Alternative Provision can be found in their handbook which is available [here](#).

Exclusions and Reintegration Team

5.6 The Exclusions and Reintegration Team commission the provision for children permanently excluded. This provision is provided from the sixth day of the exclusion (or first day for a child cared for by the authority (CfC).

5.7 In addition, if it is found that a child of compulsory school age is not in receipt of a suitable education either on roll at a school or otherwise, the team can commission an interim alternative provision, whilst securing the child a school place.

5.8 For children who are registered at a school but cannot attend school because of medical need, the team will seek to provide an alternative provision through Hillingdon's Dynamic Purchasing System.

Parents

5.9 Parents can independently commission unregistered providers and fund them

personally, however parents are advised to undertake their own due diligence with regards to safeguarding, safety and the wellbeing needs of their child. Parents should also be assured that the provision is meeting the child's educational targets and continues to make progress.

5.10 If parents need any further advice when choosing and self-funding alternative provision and/or tuition and carrying out safeguarding checks, they can refer to the advice [Choosing a Club, Tutor, or Coach: Advice for Parents](#), as well as using the [Choosing a Tutor checklist](#).

5.11 Parents are reminded that if their child attends a school, the decision to commission an unregistered alternative provision rests solely with the school in discussion with parents and carers.

6. Hillingdon's expectations for commissioning Alternative Provision

6.1 Hillingdon has clear expectations for school and services commissioning alternative provision. In summary:

6.1a Agree a Service Level agreement and risk assessment with providers. It should contain the objectives for the provision, expectations of the provider and the commissioning school, expected outcomes, reporting procedures, absence reporting, review timetable and a plan for reintegration back to school or further education.

6.1b Maintain on-going contact with the provider and pupil, with clear procedures in place to exchange information, monitor progress and attendance and provide pastoral support. If a pupil is on the roll of their previous or current school, they should remain so and encouraged to feel part of the school. Records should be kept on a pupil's progress in the provision, appropriate staff liaison arrangements should be in place, and appropriate mechanisms of challenge should be agreed.

6.1c Share all relevant information with providers and other parties involved. This should be jargon free and include any information on special educational needs and disabilities, literacy, safeguarding or other issues, as well as any information requested by the provider as appropriate. Information must be provided in accordance with data protection principles, but this should not discourage schools from providing information where they can do so.

6.1d Maintain a full record of all placements they make, including a pupil's progress, attendance, achievements, and destination following the placement. This should also include the pupil's own assessment of their placement.

6.1e Be responsible for the alternative provision used. The nature of the intervention, its objectives, and the timeline to achieve these objectives should be agreed and clearly defined. Progress against these objectives should be frequently monitored, appropriate reviews should be built in and continuity into the next stage in the child's life should be considered. Where reintegration to the school is an objective, there should be agreement on how to assess when the pupil is ready to return, and the school should provide an appropriate package of support to assist their reintegration. These objectives and plans should be agreed with providers, set out in writing, and regularly monitored, including through frequent visits to the provider.

6.1f Have a plan and processes in place to reintegrate the pupil at the end of the placement when he or she returns to the school.

6.1g Obtain from the provider a final report on the pupil's achievements during the placement including academic attainment and progress, attendance records and evidence of change in behaviour. The governing body should also seek the pupil's views on the success of the placement. Both may assist the school in deciding if and when to use that provider to support other pupils.

6.1h Plan for the pupil's reintegration into the school. This may include a discussion with the pupil's parents, and/or setting specific objectives (for example on attendance or behaviour).

6.1i If the placement does not end with reintegration into the school – for example, when a pupil reaches the end of Year 11 while still in alternative provision – the school should work with the provider to ensure that the child can move on into suitable education, or employment alongside part-time study or training.

6.1j Should collect and record information about the pupil's next destination as part of its planning for alternative provision intervention. Commissioners may wish to use information about pupils' destinations as one of the indicators of alternative provision quality.

6.2 Where a school is considering commissioning alternative provision and the child has an Education, Health Care Plan (EHCP), the provision must first be discussed with the child's EHC Officer to ensure it continues to fulfil the education provision outlined within their plan.

6.3 Equally, where a child is cared for (CfC) by the local authority, any consideration to place within alternative provision should first be discussed with the allocated Virtual School Officer and the child's social worker.

6.4 All schools have a duty to inform the Local Authority of any child not in receipt of full-time education. This notification must be made through the [Establishment Portal](#).

7. Safety and Suitability

7.1 The DfE's alternative provision guidance emphasises that, whoever sets up the placement originally, where a child is on their roll, the school themselves still needs to take responsibility for ensuring that the provision 'offers high-quality education and is suitable for the pupil's individual needs'.

7.2 Ofsted recommends that commissioners should 'ensure that they, have assessed the quality and suitability of all the providers they are using' and 'visit the pupils at their provision regularly and sufficiently frequently to ensure their well-being and progress.' In line with the school inspection handbook, Ofsted inspectors will give specific attention the evidence of learning in any off-site alternative provision, as well as the welfare and safety of pupils in alternative provision. Inspectors need to be assured that leaders have ensured that the alternative provision is a suitable and safe placement that will meet pupils' academic/vocational/technical needs, pastoral needs and, if appropriate, SEND needs.

What do Ofsted Inspectors consider when inspecting schools found to be commissioning alternative provision?

7.3 The information included below is taken directly from the [School inspection: toolkit, operating guides and information - GOV.UK](#)

7.4 Inspectors will seek to understand how leaders:

- Make informed placement decisions
Ensure that any use of alternative provision is in the best interests of the pupil, based on a clear understanding of need, intended outcomes, and planned reintegration or next steps.
- Carry out robust due diligence and compliance checks
Maintain accurate oversight of providers, including registration status, safeguarding arrangements, and legal requirements, and take appropriate action where concerns arise.
- Maintain effective safeguarding oversight
Know where pupils are at all times and ensure that safeguarding systems extend beyond the school, including regular checks, information sharing and risk management.
- Assure the quality of education and curriculum
Ensure that pupils in alternative provision access a coherent, ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum, and that provision supports progress in learning, qualifications and wider outcomes.
- Monitor attendance, engagement and behaviour
Use timely information to understand patterns, barriers and risks, and take proactive action to secure regular attendance and positive engagement.
- Evaluate impact on pupils' personal development and outcomes
Demonstrate how placements support confidence, resilience, independence, and readiness for next stages, including reintegration where appropriate.
- Exercise ongoing oversight and quality assurance
Regularly review placements through visits, data, pupil voice and provider dialogue,

ensuring leaders can evidence the impact and suitability of each placement.

7.5 A school is likely to be judged inadequate for leadership and management if:

- Placement decisions are poorly informed or not in the pupil's best interests
including where alternative provision is used without clear rationale, intended outcomes, or consideration of suitable alternatives.
- Provision is unsuitable or does not meet pupils' needs
including where the curriculum, support, or environment does not enable pupils to make progress or engage positively.
- Leaders do not carry out sufficient due diligence
including weak or absent checks on registration status, safeguarding arrangements, or quality of provision.
- Leaders lack oversight of pupils in alternative provision
including where they cannot account for which pupils attend, where they are placed, or the nature of their provision.
- Safeguarding oversight is ineffective
including where leaders do not maintain clear, ongoing assurance that pupils are safe, monitored and supported while off-site.
- Leaders do not take full responsibility for pupils' outcomes
including limited monitoring of attendance, behaviour, progress and personal development, or failure to act where concerns arise.
- Quality assurance and review processes are weak
including insufficient evaluation of impact, suitability or value of placements, and lack of action to improve or discontinue ineffective provision.

8. Safeguarding and health & safety

8.1 Those commissioning alternative provision should carry out quality assurance checks of the provision, consider the suitability of who is providing it, the safety of the building or area in which it takes place, the equipment or machinery the child has access to, as well as assess any potential risks for the individual child, or risks the child may pose to others.

8.2 Hillingdon Council provides schools with a checklist for carrying out essential [quality assurance checks](#) before placing a child in an unregistered setting. Where a provision is identified in the LA's Alternative Provision Directory, the LA officer will already have completed these checks with the provider, however LA checks are annual and so commissioners are advised to carry out their own assurance checks in addition to those of the local authority. This should involve discussions and site visits between the commissioner and the provider to evaluate the potential risks for each child at the placement, prior to the child starting.

8.3 Hillingdon LA also provides an example [pupil risk assessment](#); however it is for the individual school to expand upon this assessment to include detail regarding any specific risks to the individual child and to provide details on how these risks are mitigated, managed, and reviewed by both the school and provider.

Safeguarding checks on staff

8.4 As part of their quality assurance checks, commissioners must ensure that all adults that come into contact with the child have had a disclosure and barring service (DBS) check. Schools should consider fully the potential risks involved in unregistered placements where no staff or not all staff have DBS or other relevant checks and act to minimise these. Where there is limited information on DBS checks for staff and volunteers, Hillingdon advises schools not to commission the provision.

8.5 It is important to enquire whether the public have access to the provision, or if any other adults use the site for other purposes and what safeguards are in place to ensure that children are safe and do not come into unsupervised contact with other adults.

The quality of the accommodation

8.6 Commissioners should ensure that the accommodation and facilities used by alternative providers were fit for purpose.

8.7 Specialist resources that provide an authentic experience of the workplace are a valuable and unique experience in accessing alternative provision. However, commissioners should have assurance checks in place to ensure that equipment and machinery has the necessary testing in place to ensure it is safe and that there is robust supervision of all children using any equipment along with robust policies and assurances. Children that are undertaking specific training in alternative provisions that provide specific vocational learning opportunities (hair and beauty, car mechanics, construction etc) will be facing unfamiliar risks from the training and environment in which they are attending. They will need clear and sufficient instruction, training, and supervision to enable them to work without putting themselves and other people at risk. Commissioners should check for the provisions policy and assurances in place for PAT testing, Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) and clear policies on health and safety.

8.8 In addition, commissioners should be assured that the provisions have the correct insurances and policies in place for health and safety of all children accessing the provision.

Child Protection

8.9 For providers to keep pupils safe, they need to have a good understanding of child protection procedures, to be alert to any concerns that may arise and to know what they should do if this happens. Ask the provision for their child protection policy and procedures and e-safety child protection policy if accessing online. If children are using digital devices to access learning, do they have the appropriate firewalls and filters to prevent children accessing inappropriate material.

8.10 Schools should give providers good quality information in writing about the school's expectations for child protection and procedures they should follow if they have a concern about a child in their provision.

8.11 In addition, ask providers if they have taken part in any child protection training, who the training was through and when it was last taken.

Checking pupil attendance

8.12 Robust procedures for checking if pupils are actually attending their placements each time, they are supposed to be a crucial part of keeping them safe when they are off-site.

8.13 Best practice allows for systems in place for agreed daily reporting on attendance and punctuality at the alternative provision and agreeing who will take responsibility for following up on first day absence with the parent.

8.14 Schools must then record the attendance accurately in the school register, using the appropriate codes. Schools must not pre-populate a child's expected attendance at an alternative provision and must record all absences when they occur.

8.15 If a pupil is referred to off-site provision on a part-time basis, they should attend school as usual on the days on which they are not in the alternative provision. Full-time can be made up of two or more part-time provisions. Please refer to the [registration section](#) when commissioning unregistered provisions and be minded that an unregistered provision should not be providing all or substantially of a child's education as this is likely to be classed as full time and therefore could be seen to be operating unlawfully.

Assuring quality and impact

8.16 Commissioners should evaluate the quality of the provision by evaluating the quality of teaching and learning that children are receiving. To effectively do this, school staff should carry out regular scrutiny of a child's work and ideally have observed teaching sessions within the setting to fully evaluate their engagement and progress in learning. All schools using alternative provision, should be able to evidence that over time there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the alternative provision is positively impacting the child's education so that they are making expected progress in line with peers.

8.17 Where a child is not engaged in learning and/or not making sufficient progress, consideration must be given to cease the alternative provision, or evidence that reasonable adjustments have been made to increase outcomes for the child.

8.18 Alternative provision can promote a range of positive outcomes for pupils, including

getting them back on track when they have become disaffected with school. To maximise their chances of success when they leave school, these pupils, like any others, need to gain the best possible qualifications that they can in English, mathematics and a range of other relevant subjects, accreditation in any vocational pathway taken, as well as developing their personal, social and employability skills.

8.19 Some pupils may also benefit from short term alternative provision where the focus is to help a child to reintegrate back into mainstream school due to poor attendance or disaffected or disengaged in school. In these instances, alternative provisions are unlikely to be accredited and aim at building self-esteem and self-confidence and often key aspects such as self-discipline and the ability to work positively with a range of people.

8.20 Ofsted advise schools to 'systematically evaluate the quality of teaching and learning at the alternative provision they use, and the impact of this on pupils' progress towards the qualifications they are studying at their placements. In addition, they should also systematically evaluate the academic, personal, and social progress being made by all pupils who attend alternative provision, ensuring that the targets set for academic progress are suitably challenging.'

Access to personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationship and sex education (RSE)

8.21 Where children are missing from certain aspects of the school curriculum, commissioners of alternative provision must consider how these areas of the curriculum are covered.

8.22 Extra consideration is required to how these elements of the school curriculum can be delivered where it is likely that a child will be missing from the usual lessons delivered in school, along with opportunities for the child to ask questions or access support.

Voice of the child

8.23 When assessing the impact and outcomes from alternative provision, commissioners must gain the voice of the child on their experiences and in particular their views on how they are progressing and to assess how engaged they are in their learning.

9. Reintegration

9.1 The success to any alternative provision, is fully realised when the child has successfully reintegrated back into their mainstream school or moved successfully to a new, long-term school or placement.

9.2 For reintegration to be successful, schools and services commissioning alternative provision should be clear on their expectations for the length of time an alternative provision is intended to last and include the reintegration plan within any planning from the start.

9.3 Every placement in an unregistered alternative provision should be short term in meeting the child's immediate needs, with clear plans at the start of the placement for the longer-term provision.

9.4 It is equally important for short term placements within registered alternative providers, that the school is clear in their planning and messages with parents, child, and wider school staff, that the placement is short term and begins planning their return from the start of the placement. Ensuring the child understands that they remain a pupil of the home school and keeps in regular weekly contact with the home school is vital for maintaining trust and relationships.

9.5 Be clear in expectations for the child's return but be realistic in their targets. Usually, children who have needed time away from mainstream have additional social, emotional, and mental health needs, may have suffered trauma and are more likely to require additional support in building relationships and trust with adults and peers. It is therefore unrealistic and unfair to expect that the child can return and succeed without a clear plan of support and for all staff to support their return by making reasonable adjustments.

9.6 The reintegration plan should include all parties and identify clear actions and expectations for all involved (not just the child). If external services are involved, such as Stronger Families, Educational Psychology, social care, youth offending etc, be sure to include them in any planning and include any support actions and desired outcomes that focus on external and environmental needs in their plan. Working collaboratively in partnership with the child their family and team around the child will have the best outcomes.

9.7 Schools are reminded that the Exclusion and Reintegration Team is available to support children reintegrating back into their mainstream placements and transitions to new schools where a fresh start is required. To contact the team email: exclusionsupport@hillingdon.gov.uk

9.8 For some children in Key Stage 4, full time placements in registered alternative provisions may be designed to continue through to the end of Year 11. This does not mean that schools do not need to continue monitoring the outcomes and impact of placements, and meeting with children to ensure that they are continuing to progress within their placements. Schools still have a role for reintegration in the child's transition to post 16 options.

9.9 It is expected that schools will work with the child and the provision to plan and move on into suitable education, or employment alongside part-time study or training, identifying their planned September destination. For these children, it remains important that their plan also identifies what support they need and from whom to increase their success and schools may wish to involve services such as Hillingdon's Post 16 team who can be contacted on: post16EET@hillingdon.gov.uk .

Good practice in reintegration

9.10 A DfE study into the use of alternative provision innovation fund and success in reintegration identified the following best practice models:

- Taking on a 'key worker' role for the child and their family, offering support in a way that fits their needs and fits the situation;
- Adopting pedagogical approaches used in mentoring and coaching e.g. being grounded in youth focused approaches: person-centred, empowering, respectful and inclusive;
- Championing the needs of children to schools and professionals involved in their education and care;
- Highlighting reasonable adjustments to heighten the chances of successful reintegration;
- Working in teams with diverse professional backgrounds and life-experiences;
- Setting clear goals and expectations about the duration and monitoring of reintegration support;
- Working with children and families to sustain reintegration, via the development of coping strategies (e.g. naming feelings, asking for space, breathing exercises) and creating a network of care and understanding around the child.

10. Hillingdon's Alternative Provision Directory

10.1 Schools and commissioners need the right information to be able to decide which provision is most appropriate for a pupil. Hillingdon Local Authority has developed a local directory of alternative providers, who have met the minimum quality assurance standards.

10.2 Any alternative provision listed in the Alternative Provision Directory does not represent an endorsement or indicate Hillingdon Local Authority approves or recommends any providers listed however, does provide assurance that the provider has worked with the LA to share basic information on their health and safety and safeguarding policies.

10.3 Prior to placement, commissioners should still assess whether the provision offers high quality education, is suitable for the pupil's individual needs and carry out their own risk assessments.

10.4 Hillingdon's Alternative Provision Directory can be viewed here: [AP Directory - Leap](#).

LA monitoring process for providers included in the Hillingdon Directory

10.4 To meet our quality assurance checks providers must work with the LA on an annual basis. The quality assurance includes:

- provisions to participate in an initial QA assessment before being added to the directory
- be expected to have an annual quality assurance visit from a local authority officer
- quality assurance visits will be conducted by a physical site visit, (where appropriate) and complete a quality assurance observation form at least annually.

10.5 Results of the LA's quality assurance will be made available to schools and commissioners, on request.

10.6 Hillingdon's Quality Assurance framework can be viewed [here](#).

11. Hillingdon's SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy

11.1 Alternative provision in Hillingdon must be a collective system in which educational settings, community services, health and education support services all play a crucial part in responding to vulnerable children and assisting with reintegration to school; this moves away from viewing alternative provision as a 'market' with a selection of services, or a number of places to be commissioned.

11.2 Every child accessing Alternative Provision in Hillingdon will be:

- Given access to a diverse, imaginative and engaging curriculum that is relevant, appropriate and includes core subjects
- Involved in developing a plan which focuses on their reintegration back into mainstream school, where appropriate
- Supported by a flexible, multi-disciplinary intervention according to need which considers the whole child within their family context
- Educated in their local community, where possible and appropriate

11.3 We will work collaboratively across schools, the local authority, and health services to ensure that where possible, we respond to children's needs before they escalate and require alternative provision. Many children currently accessing alternative provision require a special school placement as outlined in their Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). If it becomes apparent a child needs specialist education, it is our aspiration they are swiftly moved to the right specialist school according to their needs.

11.4 Our ambition for alternative provision in Hillingdon is to:

- Create a three-tier alternative provision system, focusing on targeted early support within mainstream school, time limited intensive placements in an alternative provision setting, and longer-term placements to support return to mainstream or a sustainable post-16 destination
- Continue to reduce the number of exclusions from and within schools (including suspensions) through a focus on developing trauma-responsive practice in our schools and providing the right support at the right time to our children and families
- Increase the number of children supported in mainstream provision, reducing the need for off-site provision
- Increase the number of pupils successfully reintegrated into mainstream provision through an increased focus on establishing unmet needs and how these can be addressed
- Improve commissioning of independent providers to have a more flexible approach, offering a range of support tailored to children's needs
- Gain a better understanding of alternative provision pupils needs and outcomes and apply consistency of opportunity across the borough
- Reduce the rising number of children receiving independent tuition as there will be appropriate provision in place within local settings

11.5 We will achieve this by:

- Working with schools to promote inclusion and tap schools into new models of support and therefore have less children needing alternative provision
- Establishing a database for all children accessing alternative provision so that a single register of children using alternative provision can be maintained, and the data

gathered to understand the impact of alternative provision on children's educational and wellbeing outcomes

- Setting out our alternative provision 'offer' clearly as part of the local offer
- Evolving SAS as a preventative service which is aligned to support in-school settings for children who are at risk of exclusion or in need of personalised education
- Developing new service level agreements with our AP providers which will ensure the emphasis will be on providing temporary education with a view to reintegration to mainstream settings or swift transition to special schools

12. Hillingdon's expectations

12.1 Provision will be specific to the needs of children, however there are common requirements, all provision must therefore:

- a. enable good academic and vocational attainment on par with mainstream schools/offer – particularly in English, maths and science (including IT) – with appropriate accreditation and qualifications;
- b. be suited to the child's capabilities, giving them the opportunity to take appropriate qualifications and involve suitably qualified staff who can help the child make excellent progress, with rigorous assessment of progress;
- c. improve children's motivation and self-confidence, attendance and engagement with education and learning;
- d. have clearly defined objectives, including the next steps following the placement such as reintegration into mainstream education, further education, training or employment.
- e. have good arrangements for working with other relevant services such as social care, educational psychology, child and adolescent mental health services, youth offending teams and drug support services etc.

12.2 The specialism and educational focus of the service will vary and is likely to have a particular focus, for example on:

- acquisition of academic or vocational skills and qualifications
- developing strategies to cope with their additional social, emotional and mental health needs
- team building and self-esteem development
- sports and physical activity
- performing and creative arts
- planning a successful pathway in full time education or onto post 16 opportunities

12.3 Such provision is focussed on children making progress in their learning and moving onto their next step towards a settled adulthood. The time spent in alternative provision will vary depending on:

- the type of service
- the needs of the child or young person
- the agreement between the provider and commissioner
- Central to this will be the plan for the child which will have clear outcomes and timescales.

12.4 Where the child remains 'on roll' at their setting, service delivery will normally be away from the main school site where the learner is enrolled and take place during the extended school day (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday).

12.5 Children should receive the same amount of education as they would receive in a maintained school.

12.6 The Council's Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) is a flexible procurement framework that allows approved alternative provision providers to join at any time and enables the Council to commission high-quality, value-for-money alternative provision from a pre-approved pool of suppliers to meet the needs of children and young people.

13. Hillingdon's standards and target setting

Outcomes

13.1 In regard to all children, the Council is seeking improved educational outcomes:

- a reduction in the overall number of permanent exclusions and suspensions
- reduction in repeat suspensions
- reduced length of time for suspensions
- support Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC plan) outcomes
- successful pathways back to mainstream school or progression of young people into and in post 16 opportunities
- good educational attainment with specific personal, social and academic needs of children met in order to help them overcome barriers to attainment

13.2 The outcomes to be achieved for each individual child will be specific to their needs, aspirations, and circumstances. However, children, parents and carers have told us the outcomes below are important to them and should be achieved:

- improved motivation and self-confidence, attendance, and engagement with education
- successful and sustainable return to mainstream education, further education, training or employment
- relationships with school peers are maintained (where appropriate) or developed
- relationships with staff at the setting the child will return to are maintained or developed
- a trusting relationship is developed between staff, the child and their parent/carers
- the child engages and progresses their education through a range of learning experiences, tailored to their needs and aspirations; with links made to the setting they will return to
- The child feels valued for who they are and they have a sense of accomplishment
- The child is in a safe environment, and they also feel safe.

Child centred planning

13.3 When services are commissioned by the Council or education settings, providers shall work collaboratively with the commissioner (the referrer) to meet the identified outcomes sought for the children and young people placed.

13.4 The specific expected outcomes sought for a child will be included in the referral.

13.5 When services are commissioned by the Council or education settings, providers should hold an initial meeting with the referrer to baseline a child's position to ensure their needs can be met and measured.

13.6 The provider will ensure that no provision is started without the relevant paperwork, information and agreement from the referrer being in place.

13.7 The provider will ensure that all staff working with a child have read and understood all documentation and data relevant to the provision offered which may include:

- a. SEND paperwork (Education Health and Care Plan)
- b. Social care paperwork eg. Personal Education Plan
- c. Safeguarding documentation
- d. Risk assessments
- e. Medical Information

13.8 Where a child has an Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan, the provider will work to Section F of the child's plan and the outcomes identified within their plan. The referrer will share necessary information with the provider.

13.9 The referrer will hold an overarching plan for the child for which they are responsible, to include:

- a. the needs of the child
- b. the teaching, inclusion and re-engagement activities to be provided
- c. how the activities will enable a successful return to full-time education and how it will be evidenced that a child can return to their setting or move onto their next step
- d. how the child is prepared for their next steps according to their age and stage.

13.10 Within this overarching plan, the provider will set out an outcome based and person-centred plan for their delivery of alternative education provision for the child, to be jointly agreed with the referrer. It will be developed by expert professionals with high standards and high expectations of achievement for the child.

13.11 The alternative education provision plan for the child will have:

- a. clear start and end arrangements
- b. timelines for transition
- c. targets to be achieved

13.12 The alternative education provision plan for the child should be based on an effective assessment of need, which:

- a. is holistic
- b. establishes the level of need and dimensions or risk to be addressed
- c. is linked to appropriate interventions; the right children on the right programmes
- d. can help to engage children
- e. involves parents and carers
- f. is responsive to changing needs or circumstances

13.14 During the placement if the provider identifies that the child has:

- a. a new need which is not related to their identified need(s), or
- b. a level of need significantly greater than identified by the referrer

The provider shall raise this with the referrer if the Council is the commissioner, or the education setting if an education setting is the commissioner, to discuss and agree the action to be taken.

13.15 Providers shall attend additional meetings to those described elsewhere in the specification at reasonable notice at the request of either the Council, as the commissioner or the education setting, if an education setting is the commissioner.

Provider requirements

13.16 The provider shall maintain effective and regular communication with the identified referrer for a child, throughout the period in which a child is accessing their service, as defined by the referrer taking into account the length of the placement and needs of the child.

13.17 The provider shall alert the referrer and school on the same day about non-attendance or serious incidents and give weekly updates on progress against the child's plan.

13.18 If a provider identifies a child is at risk, the provider shall raise this with the relevant referrer and/or Hillingdon's Stronger Families service.

13.19 The providers shall have internal procedures consistent with the statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment.

13.20 The provider will be working with vulnerable children who at times could be at considerable risk. The provider shall have and will maintain a safeguarding policy and effective practice, which protects children and young people from abuse and other risks including child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Such policy and practice must be consistent with [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025](#).

13.21 The service shall be managed by the provider who is responsible for:

1. the operation and delivery of the service
2. supervision and management of staff and volunteers
3. statutory and other training of staff (and volunteers if relevant / appropriate)
4. monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the service

13.22 The provider will pay staff and volunteer travel and subsistence expenses in relation to delivering the service. Transport used must be:

1. appropriate to the needs of the child
2. risk assessed and a travel policy is in place
3. adheres to all the legal and insurance requirements
4. ensure all drivers hold a valid driving license.
5. regular repair and maintenance of vehicles
6. comply with current DVLA regulations with regard to transportation of school age children. This relates to, but is not limited to, MOT standards and service periods.

14. Monitoring

Performance reporting

14.1 The provider shall have a system of record keeping enabling individual/child level and service level data for reporting and aggregated data for students covering:

- a. surname, forename, date of birth, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion and postcode
- b. timetabled total weekly hours
- c. percentage attendance
- d. engagement in learning
- e. progress towards outcomes
- f. progress in learning appropriate to the service's activities
- g. qualifications/exams entered and attained (if applicable)
- h. equalities groups in line with Equality Act 2010
- i. student and parent/carers satisfaction with the service
- j. complaints and compliments received
- k. safeguarding
- l. behaviour, safety and well-being
- m. barriers to progress encountered and the impact of solutions implemented
- n. summary of joint working with other partners and services in the locality and the impact of such work

14.2 The provider shall provide regular feedback to the referrer and provide a report on each child, to be sent to the referrer, summarising:

- a. how the child's needs are being met
- b. how well they are being met including engagement and attendance
- c. specific outcomes achieved including progress in learning and whether on track

14.3 Providers will notify the Council, immediately, of any new sites being considered or changes to sites (including where new placements are made by Hillingdon Council).

14.4 Providers shall compile termly reports, these will include data on:

- a. number of children supported with a breakdown of children with an EHC plan and in care
- b. commissioners
- c. outcomes and impact

14.5 Upon request, providers shall produce case studies to evidence impact and outcomes.

14.6 The Council reserves the right to carry out case audits independently to assess impact and outcomes.

14.7 If a placement ends or a student is excluded/suspended, providers shall immediately (on the same day) notify:

- a. the referrer
- b. the school (who may also be the referrer)
- c. the Council's contracts manager
- d. parents/carers

14.8 Providers shall have a complaints policy, procedures and a log. Information on

complaints may be requested by the Council.

Contract monitoring

14.9 To ensure quality, good value and outcomes, the Council, referrers and providers are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness and quality of the services provided.

14.10 At least one meeting in an academic year will take place at the provider's site. If the provider does not have a site; alternative arrangements will be decided according to the type of provision.

14.11 During the site visits the Council will review the providers documentation, self-audits and evidence of children's progress. This may lead to the development of a service improvement action plan. Providers shall positively engage with this process and provide information upon request in a timely manner

14.12 If a concern is raised eg. by Ofsted, a school, another professional or a parent/carer, the Council has a statutory duty to make enquiries. This may also lead to a site visit and the provider shall facilitate and be available for a site visit in a timely manner.

Ofsted registered schools

In addition to the scheduled process, the following monitoring activity will be undertaken.

14.13 Providers will conform to current regulations regarding registration with the Department of Education as a school (or other education provider) and will follow the guidance and expectations set out in the relevant Ofsted framework.

14.14 Providers will send the results of any Ofsted inspection to the Council and any commissioner on the day of receipt of the published report.

14.15 If Ofsted judges the provider to require 'urgent improvement' or 'needs attention' in relation to any elements of the inspection, the Council or other commissioner may choose to remove children with immediate effect.

14.16 The provider will be expected to work with the Council to resolve all of the issues identified within the Ofsted published report. The provider will communicate with other referrers and parents/carers on progress.

Date of last review: March 2026

Date of next full review: March 2028