

Practice Guide

Education & Inclusion

Alternative Provision - Provider engagement and support, Salford

Background, purpose and rationale

Salford has a Flexible Procurement Solution (FPS) for Alternative Provision (AP). We operate a system of commissioning unregistered and registered AP, inviting providers to tender for inclusion on our framework. This is an effective flexible procurement process, which offers wide and varied alternative education programmes. This was reviewed and updated for September 2024 so that there is a wider offer available. The FPS is used to identify AP providers who can deliver excellent alternative provision for the education of pupils from Key Stage 1 and beyond by offering a flexible response to those not placed in a mainstream or special school. The FPS is used to commission AP placements for the local authority, including SEND and s19 Education Act provision, and by schools. Most of the pupils will be accessing the alternative education provision, which is delivered alongside the school's core curriculum offer, on a part-time basis.

What we did to improve children's outcomes and experiences

We have ensured that there are clear high expectations and positive relationships between the LA, schools and providers. Our AP Manager has Qualified Teacher Status and is a single point of contact for AP settings and schools. Although a small team, we are fully able to give advice and support services to all schools and academies in Salford. We have robust safeguarding audits which ensure all providers achieve full compliance and an assurance of how our children are kept safe while being educated off school site. We also have a robust Quality Assurance process for AP settings including Post 16 provisions where pupils with an EHCP are placed.

Our Alternative Provision Strategy has been developed with stakeholders. The key focus is to raise attendance, reduce suspensions and build aspirations in the future (reducing the chance of NEET). We have termly AP Lead meetings held for schools to discuss strengths, challenges and other relevant topics. We worked with Secondary AP Leads to create a guidance document and optional quality assurance for schools that would like support linked to their own internal AP. We have also introduced termly AP Provider meetings where key information is shared, as well as regular e-mail communications. We have ensured that many offers available to schools are also available to APs, such as our SEND Leader service.

What was the impact?

We have strong partnership working with all our schools. We have strengthened partnership working between the commissioning team, SEN service and Alternative Provision. AP Providers have been given the same offer from the SEND Leaders service as mainstream schools. They are now part of our Networks, attend our Forums and accessed our CPD offer.

We have supported transitions to mainstream and special schools for KS3 pupils. We have improved outcomes for both external examination results and vocational awards. In 2023/24 all 51 Year 11 pupils who did examinations attained a range of academic and vocational qualifications. For the whole cohort, attendance has shown an increase from the point of referral.

There is positive feedback from children, parents and schools during monitoring and quality assurance visits, with termly pupil voice reports evidencing increased enjoyment and engagement in education.

Find out more Contact

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