



Manchester City Council's Alternative Provision Quality Assurance Protocol 2024/25

What is alternative provision?

Alternative Provision (AP) is defined by the government as: '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'.¹

Routes into AP can include permanent or fixed-term exclusion, off-site direction by a school, health referrals and temporary referrals when a child is awaiting a placement in a mainstream school.²

AP can take many different forms including pupil referral units (PRUs), Hospital schools, AP academies, AP free schools, independent AP schools and unregistered provision.³

Rationale

'All children should be educated in a setting that is visible, safe, suitable and delivering a quality education.'⁴

- The 'Our Manchester' strategy sets out the vision for Manchester to be in the top-flight of world-class cities by 2025. The Children and Young People's Plan translates the Our Manchester priorities into a vision for building a safe, happy, healthy, and successful future for children and young people. The Manchester Education Strategy⁵ reiterates the ambitions for all young people in the city.
- Ensuring Children receive a good or better experience whilst at any educational setting is paramount and that schools and Manchester City Council remain committed to sustained improvements and improved outcomes across all provision.

¹ Department of Education, *Alternative Provision: Statutory guidance for local authorities*, 2013

² Department of Education, *SEND Review: Right Support Right Place Right Time*, 2022

³ Department of Education, *SEND Review: Right Support Right Place Right Time*, 2022

⁴ The Centre for Social Justice, *Out in The Open*, 2023

⁵ <https://democracy.manchester.gov.uk/documents>

- The Children and Education Services Directorate will be helping to ensure that we achieve our goal of Manchester being recognised as a UNICEF Child Friendly City. More information is included on the website [Manchester and UNICEF UK Child Friendly City journey \(ouryear.uk\)](https://ouryear.uk).
- Education services in Manchester embrace all children and young people and we are ambitious for success for all young people in the city irrespective of the type of educational setting they attend. All transitions for young people should be designed with the child at the centre, be that between phase, setting or authority. The education system in the city must ensure that young people gain the necessary experiences, outcomes and qualifications required for effective progression.
- We are proud to work in partnership with alternative providers part of the Manchester Inclusive Alternative Provision Strategy (MIAPS) to embed a self-improving system across all aspects of the Manchester alternative provision landscape and subsequently secure improved educational outcomes for all young people, especially the most vulnerable in the city.

Introduction

The Manchester Inclusive Alternative Provision Strategy aims to develop both the quality and sufficiency of AP in Manchester and align with the DfE's Three-Tier Model of SEND and Alternative Provision support, as per the SEND and AP Improvement Plan, 2023. The plan recognises 'the vital role that alternative provision can play in supporting children and young people to remain in mainstream education by offering early, targeted support; and in offering time-limited or transitional places in alternative provision schools for pupils who need more intensive support.'⁶ Manchester priorities include:

- Ensuring all settings are compliant with all relevant legislation and statutory standards.
- Ensuring that all young people in all settings are safe and visible.
- Ensuring that all young people have access to high-quality provision and education.
- Enabling AP settings to sit as a community asset to support collaborative, continuous improvement.
- Secure lasting relationships with all stakeholders and support self-improvement through robust QA processes.

Alternative Provision used to fulfil the Section 19 duty⁷ which includes both primary and secondary Pupil Referral Units and Manchester Hospital School is quality assured in line with [Manchester City Council's School Quality Assurance Protocol 23/24](#).

⁶ Department of Education *SEND and AP Improvement Plan, 2023*

⁷ MCC Children and Education Services *Section 19 Policy, 2021*

AP Flexible Purchasing System (FPS) Framework

Manchester's MIAPS FPS Framework for Alternative Provision was introduced in 2022 to ensure that Manchester can utilise and signpost to range of good quality, cost-effective alternative provision for children and young people. The framework is divided into the following lots:

- Lot 1 Full-time Alternative Provision (Registered Independent Schools)**
- Lot 2 Part-time Alternative Provision Sports Science, Health, and Wellbeing**
- Lot 3 Part-time Alternative Provision Sports Coaching/Life Skills.**
- Lot 4 Part-time Alternative Provision Hair and Beauty**
- Lot 5 Part-time Alternative Provision Construction**
- Lot 6 Part-time Alternative Provision Creative/Media**
- Lot 7 Complementary- Animal Care**
- Lot 8 Complementary- Innovation**
- Lot 9 One-to-One Tutoring**
- Lot 10 Mentoring and Coaching**

Alternative Providers are invited to tender for a place on the AP FPS Framework and successful providers are placed on the framework following a rigorous evaluation, selection, and quality assurance process.

Providers approved via the FPS process form the Manchester Inclusive Alternative Provision Strategy (MIAPS) Directory which provides schools with a recommended list of providers that are subject to local authority quality-assurance, alongside commissioning schools' own QA and due diligence processes.

The MIAPS FPS framework allows for:

- A collaborative working relationship between the local authority, commissioning schools and alternative providers, driven through the MIAPS Steering Group.
- Ability to support settings through shared inclusive values: placement planning that is child/young person centred and outcomes focused.
- Ability to introduce innovative systems and approaches that support continuous development and shares expertise.
- Align with the Tiered approach to SEND and AP as per the DfE Send and AP Improvement plan.⁸
- Apply the Manchester AP Quality Assurance Framework to support development of AP settings and support schools' own QA procedures as lead commissioners.

Our Remit

The local authority has a statutory duty to ensure that all children in Manchester have access to good education provision. This means that we keep oversight of the educational experience from 0-19 years for most learners and for those learners with Special Education Needs and Disabilities, from 0-25yrs.

This includes provision from: children's centres, childminders, private and school run nurseries, schools both maintained and academies, colleges, youth services and alternative provision.

Statutory Responsibility

The statutory responsibility for securing services which address the needs of all children and young people remains with the Director of Children's Services (DCS). Through the DCS and the Lead Member for Children's Services, MCC retains a clear role for:

- *working with partners to promote prevention and early intervention to narrow the attainment gap and promote the well-being of children and young people.*
- *ensuring fair access to schools and promoting high quality places*
- *working with headteachers, principals, governors, academy sponsors and AP Proprietors and Leads to promote educational excellence for all, tackling underperformance and promoting collaboration.*

Statutory context

The SEND and AP Improvement Plan: Right support, Right place, Right time, 2023 – sets out to 'deliver a single national system that delivers consistently for every child and young person with SEND and in alternative provision.'⁹

Manchester schools directly commissioning either registered or unregistered AP places, are ultimately responsible for the oversight of the provision, which includes the overall quality and all aspects of compliance. MCC are obliged to ensure that unregistered APs are not operating contrary to Section 96 of The Education and Skills Act 2008¹⁰. MCC will act upon reported concerns regarding any AP, registered or unregistered, on or off the

⁸ Department of Education *SEND and AP Improvement Plan*, 2023

⁹ Department of Education *SEND and AP Improvement Plan*, 2023

¹⁰ Education and Skills Act *Unregistered independent education institution*, 2008.

MIAPS framework, in relation to Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Quality of Provision or other specified concerns.

The local authority will monitor progress and promote high standards of provision in all AP. Alongside statutory requirements, the LA will continuously support continuous improvement, ensuring curriculum and core objectives are effectively implemented through the various AP offers.

The role of the Local Authority

Manchester City Council works actively to influence and sustain the development of positive relationships with educational settings, irrespective of status, based on trust, respect and support. This relationship with all AP's is based on a recognition by all partners of the positive impact of provider self-evaluation and the self-improving system; the importance of raising standards and improving lives for children and young people, especially the most vulnerable. It also revolves around the principle of local authority intervention in inverse proportion to success and relies on a culture of trust and openness.

The role of the MIAPS Development Team

The named AP Development Lead is the key link within the local authority and works collaboratively with the named AP officer to support proprietors and centre leads in all alternative provision. Both the Development Lead and the AP officer will retain an overview of the status of an AP, including strengths and areas for development. They will work appropriately with all known APs to offer ongoing support and be the key point of contact within the LA.

The MIAPS Steering Group is an additional component of support. Regular meetings allow for ongoing dialogue between schools, the LA and APs which supports a network of support and draws on expertise from across the Manchester educational landscape. Sub-groups within the Steering Group allows for focused support for the various types of AP. For unregistered providers, for example, support and improvement may come from the unregistered sub-group where issues are shared, and solutions explored.

The MIAPS board consists of LA representatives that meet bi-annually to contribute to developments within the Manchester AP landscape. Representation from SEND, Safeguarding, Virtual School, Health and Safety and Post-16 ensures that key updates, challenges, and opportunities are also explored and shared with APs.

The role of the Quality Assurance Professional (QAP)

The QAP is commissioned by Manchester City Council to ensure that APs have a suitably experienced professional to quality assure their judgements about their provisions annually. MCC commissioned QAPs have all completed a procurement process outlining their experience and impact specifically relating to securing school improvement, including data analysis; action planning; identification of key priorities; reviews of learning and teaching and challenging leaders to bring about improvement. The QAP will understand the nuances and challenges within the AP context and apply the latest DfE guidance and advice in their approach.

Manchester City Council will provide quality assurance for providers on the MIAPS framework. The offer will also include support for MIAPS providers applying for registered school status or developing a new unregistered offer. If a concern is raised, all APs with Manchester young people in attendance will be provided with a 'Responsive' offer of QA:

All AP providers on the MIAPS framework will receive an annual visit from either the QAP, AP Lead or AP officer. Those identified as requiring further visits will be determined on a case-by-case basis (e.g., new to the framework, request from AP, responding to a reported concern).

The Quality Assurance Framework and Process

The MCC AP Quality Assurance framework aims to capture both compliance and effectiveness of provision and is split into five sections:

- 1. Safeguarding**
- 2. Health and Safety**
- 3. Quality of Education**
- 4. SEND**
- 5. Admissions, Attendance, Guidance and Support**

Application of this process will include but is not limited to:

- Notification of QA visit date.
- Request for completion of self-assessment proforma and sharing/signposting to policies.
- QAP visit to include meetings, learning walks, observations, student voice, paperwork reviews.
- Settings will be provided with a report to support ongoing development.
- Any significant concerns raised will be escalated as part of an action plan.

Safeguarding and Health and Safety Quality Assurance

The 'Responsive' QA process will also ensure that safeguarding is effective and that all Health and Safety requirements are compliant, the Manchester AP QA Framework prioritises these aspects of provision as key strands and draws on expertise within the safeguarding team in Education and the MCC Health and Safety team.

Evaluation of the impact of the QA process

The SSQA team evaluate the quality of the QA reports termly. SSQAs maintain a continuous dialogue with QAPs and provide feedback on an individual basis as appropriate. Evaluation outcomes are incorporated into QAP termly briefing sessions and key points emphasised to ensure consistency of message.

To ensure evidence of impact and inform development, the Local Authority QA Board provides strategic governance within the Education and Skills service for the Quality Assurance arrangements for schools. The Board monitors, evaluates and reviews the impact of the QA arrangements across the range of provision. This includes evaluation of the impact of any brokered support and intervention.

Local Authority Training Offer

Feedback from quality assurance will inform the content of training calendar, devised annually, available to all alternative providers on the MIAPS framework. The calendar will draw on expertise from schools, local authority leads and local partners to support self-improvement within all AP settings.

Summary

This process ensures that all alternative provision in Manchester is supported by a robust quality assurance protocol that encourages and supports self-development, evaluation, and continuous improvement. This is relevant to all provision in which Manchester young people are in attendance.

The AP Development Lead and Officer will provide ongoing support and advice to all proprietors and provision leads and will source support for APs through MIAPs partners and mainstream settings.

Manchester City Council's approach to AP development continues to evolve to meet the needs of the wider system.

