

How OFSTED inspects alternative provision (webinar December 2023)

A blog is available on inspecting the curriculum here [Our approach to inspecting the curriculum in alternative provision – Ofsted: schools and further education & skills \(FES\) \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

Context

When inspecting alternative provision (AP), OFSTED uses the Education Inspection Framework as it does for mainstream schools. Paragraphs 292-297 give additional context for different provision-specific considerations. In terms of AP OFSTED will look at:

- each APs specific context
- the core work and objectives
- the curriculum and its ambition
- how AP works to support transitions to next generations.

Inspectors will want to know the following for each provider:

- how are young people's needs assessed and identified on arrival?
- how is this information used to ambitious for the young person?
- is there a coherent sequencing of the young person's needs and aspirations?
- how does this all lead to future transitions and next steps?

In terms of what information may be looked at, inspectors may look at assessments in some or all of the following (although this is not an exhaustive list):

- national curriculum and reading
- communication and interaction
- cognition and learning
- social, emotional and mental health
- AP specific core work/objectives of the AP.

Curriculum

When they are inspecting the curriculum, inspectors will want to know if it is:

- ambitious? Does it lead to qualifications or other outcomes?
- planned and sequential?
- rigorous?
- addressing the gaps and delays as assessed on arrival?

They will also want to know if it is a curriculum which has appropriate content, coverage, structure and sequencing, whether it is effectively implemented and has an impact on pupil outcomes.

Commissioning

Inspectors will have due regards for the statutory guidance published in 2013.

They will want to do case sampling, looking at a wide range of documents such as:

- EHCP and reviews
- PEP and reviews
- IEPs (or equivalent)
- timetables

- Programmes of Study/curriculum documents
- pupil work
- baseline or 'on-entry' data
- minutes of meetings with agencies, such as health and social care
- records of parent meetings
- transition documents from both individual schools and the local authority
- behaviour and attendance data.

Outcomes and impact

Outcomes will be considered to be the benefit of difference made as a result of an intervention.

Inspectors will not just focus on GCSEs. They will look at other qualifications and accreditations, based on the needs and baseline assessments of the young people. They will also want to see outcomes for individual young people, based on what they have said is important to them; pupil voice will be very important in inspections. This includes life outcomes, such as independence, preparation for adulthood and employment. Personal and social development, along with participation in society will also be used to assess outcomes and impact of the work AP is doing. Other areas that may be looked at are whether the young person is ready to lead a healthy adult life, to move on to the next step and has developed emotional resilience.

Whatever courses or programmes young people are following, inspectors will want to see that there is a purpose to it and that they are not merely being 'occupied'.

Behaviour

Pupil voice will be at the heart of any inspection around behaviour.

Good AP are considered to have high expectations of all young people. They provide support when it is necessary, particularly on arrival at the provision and have strong processes, systems and structures in place to support behaviour management. They have a pro-active approach and actively teach the behaviours that are expected. Inspectors seeing challenging behaviour is not a 'deal-breaker' in terms of achieving a good or outstanding judgement, however inspectors will want to see how the behaviour is responded to, aligning with the processes, systems and structures in place. When assessing outcomes and impact, it is crucial to be able to evidence impact since arrival, using the baseline assessments.

Inspectors will ask questions such as:

- what are the standards of behaviour?
- what will they expect to see in lessons and around the provision?
- what training have staff been given?
- what do you do in terms of behaviour management? Why do you do it? What is the impact?

Inspectors will also want to understand the specific needs of the young people attending and how they are supported. How are the needs of the young people assessed and what mechanisms are in place to support their specific needs? How are staff supported and suitably trained to meet the needs of the young people? How do you track improvement? When considering these things, they will want to look at:

- strategic plan of action
- individual behaviour plans

- records and analysis of behaviour and restraint data
- records of any 'seclusion', internal exclusion' or 'calming rooms'. When looking at this, they expect AP to have due regards to two documents, [Positive environments where children can flourish - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/positive-environments-where-children-can-flourish) and [Behaviour in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-in-schools).

The inspectors will want to see how leaders analyse their reactions and effectiveness of actions taken.

Schools commissioning AP.

They made it very clear that, even where a local authority publishes a directory, it is the school's own responsibility to ensure that any AP they commission is safe and appropriate. This is particularly important where an AP is unregistered.

When a school is inspected, it can be expected that the inspectors will, at the very least, contact any AP that is commissioned by telephone and any unregistered providers will be likely to be visited.

School leaders must be able to explain why the AP has been chose for each individual pupil and how its impact is being measured.