

# Finding alternative provision

## A useful checklist for parents and carers

This guide is for parents and carers who are considering alternative provision that they will arrange and fund themselves, often as part of elective home education.

Alternative provision can offer flexible and personalised learning opportunities for some children and young people. However, it's important to know that many alternative provision settings are not regulated or inspected in the same way as schools. This means there can be differences in the quality of education, safeguarding arrangements, and oversight.


This document will help you understand what to look for when exploring alternative provision, so you can make informed decisions and feel confident that your child will be safe, supported and able to learn. It provides practical guidance on checking safeguarding arrangements, understanding the provider's responsibilities and asking the right questions before your child attends.

Take this checklist with you when you visit alternative provisions to help you remember what questions to ask.

### Safety and safeguarding (essential checks)


- Are all staff and volunteers Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked and how frequently is this reviewed?
- Does the provider have a child protection/safeguarding policy?
- Is there a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)?
- Do staff receive regular safeguarding training?
- Are there clear systems for reporting concerns or incidents?

Are there risk assessments in place (including for trips or activities)?

 Good alternative provision should demonstrate safe practices, appropriate safeguarding checks and clear procedures.


## Registration and legitimacy

- Is the provision a registered school or setting (if it should be)?
- If not registered, what checks have been carried out?
- Are you sure the setting is not acting as an unregistered school?

 Most alternative provisions are unregistered and not inspected nationally, so extra checks are important before placement. You need to be confident how they will be safeguarding your child.

## Quality of education

- Will my child receive a broad and balanced curriculum?
- Can they work towards recognised qualifications?
- Is the teaching appropriate for my child's age, ability and needs?
- Are staff qualified and experienced in supporting children with similar needs?
- How will my child's progress be measured and shared?


 Alternative provision should provide high-quality education tailored to the child's needs and support progress similar to mainstream settings where possible.

## How can I check if the teaching is right for my child?

You can ask the provider some simple questions and look for clear examples of how they will meet your child's needs:

- Ask about age groups and levels  
“What ages and abilities do you usually work with?” This helps you check your child won't feel out of place or be grouped inappropriately.
- Share your child's needs clearly  
Explain your child's strengths, challenges, and any SEND needs.  
You could ask:
  - “Have you supported children with similar needs before?”
  - “What strategies would you use to support my child?”
- Find out how learning is adapted  
Ask:
  - “How do you adapt teaching for different abilities?”

- “What does a typical session or lesson look like?”
- “How do you help children understand and stay engaged with learning?”
- Observe or try it out if possible  
Ask if you can visit, observe a session or speak to staff. If possible, see if your child can attend a trial session. This can help you see whether your child feels comfortable, understood and engaged.

 A good provider should be able to explain clearly how they will tailor learning to your child and should be happy to answer your questions.

## Communication and oversight


- Who is responsible for checking the quality and safety of the provision?
- How often will the placement be reviewed?
- Will I receive regular updates on attendance, behaviour and progress?
- Can I easily contact the provider if I have concerns?
- If a school is funding the provision, how will they work closely with the school?

## Hours, attendance and routine

- How many hours per week will my child attend?
- What does a typical day look like?
- How is attendance recorded and followed up?


## Next steps and future planning

- Is there a plan for the future (for example, returning to school, college or training)?
- How long is the placement expected to last?
- What support will my child receive during transitions?
- How will I know the provision has been successful?

 Good alternative provision should include clear objectives and next steps, such as reintegration into education or training.

## Understanding your child

- How will the provider understand my child's needs, interests and challenges?
- Will my child be involved in the creation of a personalised plan with clear goals?
- How does the provision support social, emotional and behavioural needs?
- Are there links to health, SEND or support services if needed?
- If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), what outcomes and provisions in the EHCP are the provision supporting your child with?

 Placements should be planned around the individual child and regularly reviewed, including in terms of whether the provision is meeting the child's needs as specified in Section F of their EHCP.

## Questions you might want to ask

- “Can you show me your safeguarding and DBS processes?”
- “How will you keep my child safe?”
- “What qualifications or outcomes will my child achieve?”
- “How will you communicate with me and my child's home school?”
- “What happens if things aren't working?”