

Raising Standards in Non-School Alternative Provision **What You Need to Know**

Read 4 Key takeaways from the
DfE's new *Non-school alternative
provision voluntary national
standards* document.



Safeguarding and child welfare

Safeguarding remains a non-negotiable priority.

Providers are expected to:

- **Carry out enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on all staff.**
- **Maintain a single central record of vetting and safeguarding checks.**
- **Have clear policies covering child protection, behaviour, and staff conduct.**
- **Appoint a trained safeguarding lead, with responsibilities for referrals and liaison.**
- **Keep settings secure and restrict access appropriately.**



Health and safety

Children must learn in safe environments. Standards require:

- **A robust health and safety policy, including risk assessments and support for medical needs.**
- **Adequate first aid provision and reporting of incidents.**
- **Regular inspection and safe use of specialist equipment.**
- **A fire safety policy, evacuation plan and risk assessments kept up to date.**



Admissions, support and guidance

Admissions processes should be transparent, inclusive and centred on each child's needs. Providers are expected to:

- **Share clear admissions policies and referral processes.**
- **Keep detailed records, including educational plans and safeguarding information.**
- **Offer a thorough induction so children understand expectations and support available.**
- **Record and report attendance promptly, with follow-up on absences.**
- **Implement behaviour strategies and share updates with commissioners and parents.**



Quality of education








Provision must be meaningful, not a holding arrangement. Standards emphasise:

- **Employing staff with the right skills and knowledge to deliver programmes.**
- **Careful planning of curricula to suit children's age, ability and needs, with literacy and numeracy embedded.**
- **Regular assessment and review of progress, shared with commissioners and families.**
- **Continuous self-evaluation and reflection by providers.**



What You Should Do Now

While there is no set date for when these voluntary standards will become statutory, it is advised that local authorities and providers begin to implement the following:

-  **Prioritise safety** - ensure every alternative provision setting is secure and child-focused.
-  **Make provision purposeful** - placements must support real educational and personal outcomes.
-  **Embed accountability** - integrate the standards into local commissioning frameworks.
-  **Use as a benchmark** - providers can self-evaluate against the standards to raise quality.
-  **Reassure families** - children outside the school system still deserve high-quality support.
-  **Act early** - adopting the standards now eases the transition when they become mandatory.
-  **Leave no child behind** - build provision that helps every child thrive.