



# ALTERNATIVE ACRES

## Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Information Report

Academic Year 2026/27

|                                    |                                                                        |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Head of Provision                  | Gemma Robertson                                                        |
| Current SEND designated person     | Gemma Robertson                                                        |
| Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) | Daun Beresford                                                         |
| Deputy DSL                         | Gemma Robertson                                                        |
| Inclusion & Engagement Lead        | Rachel Archer                                                          |
| Core age range                     | 11–16, with appropriate post-16 placements                             |
| Placement ratios                   | 1:1, 1:2 and 1:4                                                       |
| Safeguarding record                | CPOMS                                                                  |
| Reviewed                           | 01/09/2026                                                             |
| Next review                        | 01/09/2027 or sooner following significant service or guidance changes |

This report explains Alternative Acres' SEND offer in accessible terms for learners, families, commissioners and professionals. Alternative Acres is a non-school alternative provision; Gemma Robertson's SEND role is an internal designated role and is not presented as the statutory school SENCO role.



## Welcome

At Alternative Acres, we believe every young person deserves the opportunity to succeed, including those who have experienced significant barriers to education.

We provide a nurturing, farm-based alternative provision for young people aged 11–16 and appropriate post-16 learners. Education, nature, animals, practical learning and positive relationships are combined to help learners rebuild confidence, re-engage with learning and work towards meaningful outcomes.

Many learners referred to us have overlapping SEND, social, emotional and mental health needs, autism, ADHD, anxiety, communication needs or histories of disrupted attendance. We recognise that learning is more likely to happen when a young person feels safe, respected, understood and appropriately challenged.

## Our vision

Our vision is to provide an inclusive educational environment in which learners can feel safe and valued, rebuild confidence, develop knowledge and skills, strengthen relationships, increase independence and prepare for their next stage.

- Feel safe, respected and valued.
- Re-engage with education and experience success.
- Develop confidence, resilience and positive relationships.
- Build academic, practical and employability skills.
- Increase independence and prepare for adulthood and transition.

## Our SEND ethos

We understand that every learner is different. We look beyond labels and diagnosis to understand strengths, interests, communication, sensory needs, regulation, previous experiences, aspirations and barriers to learning.

We recognise behaviour as communication while maintaining clear, safe boundaries. Our approach is relationship-based, positive and individualised, with high expectations adapted to the learner's needs rather than removed.

## Status of Alternative Acres and SEND responsibilities

Alternative Acres is a non-school alternative provision, not a maintained school, academy, PRU or special school. We therefore do not present ourselves as holding the statutory SENCO duties that apply to schools.

Commissioning schools and local authorities retain their applicable statutory SEND responsibilities, including responsibilities connected with EHC plans. Alternative Acres works collaboratively with commissioners, families and professionals to deliver the provision agreed with us.



The DfE voluntary national standards for non-school alternative provision are an important benchmark for our safeguarding, admissions/support and quality of education arrangements.

## Leadership for SEND and inclusion

Gemma Robertson is currently Alternative Acres' designated person for SEND and has extensive experience supporting learners with SEN. Alternative Acres intends to recruit an experienced SEND lead as the provision develops.

Rachel Archer, Inclusion & Engagement Lead, supports learner engagement and inclusion. Daun Beresford, DSL, provides safeguarding oversight where SEND and vulnerability intersect with safeguarding.

## Types of SEND and needs we may support

Alternative Acres has experience supporting learners with a range of needs, including:

- Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.
- Autism / communication and interaction needs.
- ADHD and attention/regulation needs.
- Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).
- Anxiety and emotionally based barriers to attendance.
- Overlapping or multiple needs requiring an individualised approach.

## Admissions and referrals

Alternative Acres welcomes referrals from local authorities, schools, academies and other commissioning organisations. Every referral is considered individually.

A diagnosis or EHC plan does not automatically make a placement suitable or unsuitable. Before agreeing a placement, we seek enough information to understand the learner's needs, risks, communication, medical considerations, current education arrangements, intended outcomes and required staffing ratio.

## Information considered before placement

We may consider EHC plan information, educational reports, previous attainment, attendance, risk assessments, behaviour/support plans, safeguarding information relevant to safe delivery, medical/allergy information, professional advice and parent/carers and learner views.

Where important information is missing, we may ask the commissioner for clarification before a placement starts.

- EHC plan and SEND information where applicable.
- Educational reports and starting-point/attainment information.



- Attendance and previous placement information.
- Safeguarding and risk information relevant to safe delivery.
- Behaviour/support plans and successful strategies.
- Medical, allergy and medication information.
- Communication, sensory and accessibility needs.
- Learner and parent/carer views.
- Professional advice and intended commissioner outcomes.

## Transition into Alternative Acres

Where appropriate, transition visits help learners become familiar with the environment, staff, routines and animals before starting. We may also use planned transition contact or keep-in-contact opportunities to reduce anxiety and support continuity.

Transition arrangements are individual and depend on the learner, commissioner and placement plan.

## Placement ratios

Alternative Acres offers commissioned placements at 1:1, 1:2 and 1:4. The appropriate ratio is agreed according to learner need, compatibility, intended outcomes and risk assessment.

The commissioned ratio is a baseline. Supervision may be increased, activities adapted or groupings reduced where risk or need requires it.

## Identifying individual needs

At the beginning of a placement, staff build a picture of the learner's starting points and support needs. This may include educational strengths, areas for development, communication, sensory needs, emotional regulation, interests, aspirations, independence and what has or has not worked in previous settings.

This information informs an individualised programme linked to the commissioned aims and, where relevant, EHC plan outcomes.

## Our curriculum

Our curriculum combines academic learning with purposeful practical and outdoor education. Depending on the learner and commission, opportunities may include Functional Skills English and mathematics, animal care, horse management, woodland/environmental learning, personal development, employability, careers, practical problem-solving, independence and preparation for adulthood.



Practical activity is planned as education: staff should be able to identify the knowledge, skill, independence or wider outcome being developed.

## Functional Skills and BKSb

BKSb may be used to identify starting points and support learning in Functional Skills English and mathematics. Staff also use discussion, observation, work samples and practical application to understand progress.

Alternative Acres is not an exam centre. Where formal external assessment or examination arrangements are required, these are coordinated with the commissioner and/or an approved centre.

## Teaching and learning

Teaching is adapted to the learner while maintaining appropriate ambition. Approaches may include modelling, demonstration, discussion, questioning, visual support, chunking, repetition, practical application and supported independent practice.

Positive relationships and regulation support are used to create the conditions for learning; they are not treated as a substitute for education.

## How we may support SEMH and anxiety

Support may include predictable routines, trusted adults, emotional check-ins, co-regulation, positive behaviour support, outdoor regulation, manageable steps, restorative approaches and a calm learning environment.

For learners with emotionally based barriers to attendance, transition and re-engagement are planned carefully with the commissioner and family. Attendance expectations and any adaptations should remain purposeful and regularly reviewed.

## How we may support autistic learners

Support may include predictable routines, visual structure, clear communication, additional processing time, reduced sensory demand, structured transitions, individual workspace where appropriate and opportunities for regulation.

Adjustments are individual; we do not assume that all autistic learners need the same approach.

## How we may support ADHD and attention/regulation needs

Support may include practical learning, movement, chunked activities, visual prompts, clear goals, active learning, positive reinforcement and carefully managed transitions.

Staff focus on the learner's individual presentation rather than relying on diagnosis alone.



## Speech, language and communication

Support may include clear language, visual supports, extra processing time, checking understanding, supported conversation and alternative ways for learners to demonstrate what they know.

Staff should distinguish a difficulty expressing an answer from a lack of understanding.

## Sensory and environmental needs

The farm environment can benefit some learners but may also create sensory demands. We consider noise, animals, smells, weather, clothing, mud, shared spaces and transitions between indoor and outdoor areas.

Reasonable adjustments are considered wherever practical and safe.

## Personal care and toileting

Alternative Acres does not provide personal care or toileting assistance. Learners attending are expected to manage toileting independently.

Staff do not routinely assist with using the toilet, wiping, changing clothing, washing or other intimate/personal-care tasks. If a learner requires this support, the need must be discussed with the parent/carer and commissioner because it falls outside Alternative Acres' service offer. Emergency first aid is separate from routine personal care.

## Medical needs

Relevant medical conditions, allergies and medication needs are considered before placement and during risk assessment. Individual arrangements are agreed where necessary under our First Aid, Medical Conditions and Medicines Policy.

Medical needs are considered alongside SEND and safeguarding so that learners can access education safely wherever reasonably possible.

## Student voice

Learners are encouraged to contribute to decisions about their education through everyday conversations, mentoring, target setting, review discussions, feedback and activity/curriculum planning.

We want learners to understand what they are working towards and to have a meaningful voice in how support is delivered.



## Working with parents and carers

Parents and carers often hold important knowledge about strengths, triggers, communication and previous support. We value their contribution to transition, reviews, target setting and planning.

Communication is kept professional and proportionate, with safeguarding and confidentiality considered when deciding what information can be shared.

## Working with commissioners and professionals

We work with local authorities, referring schools and relevant professionals such as educational psychologists, social workers, health professionals, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, early help and family support services where they are involved.

The professionals involved will vary by learner; Alternative Acres does not imply that all of these services are provided by Alternative Acres itself.

## EHC plans and reviews

Where a learner has an EHC plan, Alternative Acres seeks access to the relevant sections needed to understand and safely deliver the commissioned placement.

We can contribute information about attendance, engagement, progress, learner views and the provision delivered to support commissioner/local-authority review processes. Alternative Acres does not independently amend an EHC plan or determine the local authority's statutory provision.

## Preparing for adulthood

For older learners, including appropriate post-16 placements, we support development of independence, communication, decision-making, responsibility, employability, problem-solving, community participation and future planning.

Careers work should broaden aspirations rather than assume that a learner attending a farm-based provision should pursue an animal or land-based career.

## Mental health and wellbeing

Alternative Acres is an educational provision rather than a clinical therapeutic service. Emotional wellbeing nevertheless underpins successful engagement and learning.

Our environment, relationships, practical learning and interaction with animals may support regulation and confidence. Where a learner requires specialist clinical assessment or treatment, we work alongside the commissioner/family and relevant external professionals rather than presenting ordinary mentoring as therapy.



## Accessibility and reasonable adjustments

We consider reasonable adjustments that can reduce disability-related barriers to our service. These may involve communication, environment, sensory support, task presentation, processing time, supervision or alternative ways to record learning.

Adjustments are considered individually and balanced with safety, animal welfare and the practical limits of the farm environment.

## Safeguarding and SEND

Learners with SEND can experience additional safeguarding vulnerabilities, including communication barriers, exploitation risk or difficulty recognising/reporting abuse. Safeguarding is therefore integrated into our SEND practice.

Daun Beresford is DSL and Gemma Robertson is Deputy DSL. CPOMS is Alternative Acres' authoritative safeguarding record.

## Monitoring progress

Progress is measured from the learner's starting point and against the purpose of the placement. Evidence may include academic/Functional Skills progress, attendance, engagement, communication, independence, regulation, practical/vocational skills, behaviour for learning, careers/preparation for adulthood and agreed EHC/commissioned outcomes.

Wider progress complements rather than replaces appropriate academic ambition.

## Reporting and review

Alternative Acres provides commissioners with proportionate information about attendance, engagement, progress and agreed outcomes. Significant changes in need or risk are raised promptly rather than waiting for a routine report.

Where a placement is no longer meeting need or requires materially different support, we seek commissioner review.

## Quality assurance

We review provision through learner voice, parent/carers and commissioner feedback, staff reflection, safeguarding and policy audits, learning/progress evidence, professional development and external quality-assurance activity where applicable.

Quality assurance is used to improve actual practice rather than simply produce paperwork.



## Compliments, concerns and complaints

We welcome feedback from learners, families, schools and commissioners. Concerns can be raised with the Head of Provision and, where necessary, through our Complaints and Concerns Policy.

Safeguarding, allegations, data-protection and whistleblowing matters follow their specific procedures.

## Local Offers and independent SEND information/advice

Families can obtain information about SEND services, EHC plans and local support through their local authority's SEND Local Offer and independent SEND information, advice and support arrangements.

For Nottinghamshire, the SEND Local Offer is available through Notts Help Yourself. Nottingham City families can use the Nottingham City SEND Local Offer. Families may also contact their allocated EHC plan case officer/SEND team where applicable.

## Referring local authorities

Alternative Acres regularly works with Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council and can consider referrals from neighbouring local authorities where the provision can safely and suitably meet the learner's needs.

We work collaboratively with commissioners, families and professionals throughout the placement, with outcome-focused planning and review.

## Key contacts

Head of Provision / current SEND designated person: Gemma Robertson

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Daun Beresford

Deputy DSL: Gemma Robertson

Inclusion & Engagement Lead: Rachel Archer

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## Related Alternative Acres documents

This report should be read alongside the SEND and Inclusion Policy 2026/27, Admissions and Referral Policy 2026/27, Learner Needs and Risk Assessment Policy 2026/27, Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Policy 2026/27, Assessment,



Feedback and Progress Monitoring Policy 2026/27, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2026/27 and Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility Policy 2026/27.

## Review of this report

This SEND Information Report is reviewed annually, or sooner if there are significant changes to Alternative Acres' SEND offer, commissioning arrangements, legislation or relevant national guidance.

## Quick guide to our SEND offer

|                                                      |                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Who do we support?</b>                            | Core ages 11–16 and appropriate post-16 learners, considered individually.                                                                     |
| <b>Placement options</b>                             | 1:1, 1:2 and 1:4 commissioned placements.                                                                                                      |
| <b>Does a learner need an EHC plan?</b>              | Not necessarily. Suitability is based on need, intended outcomes, risk and what has been commissioned.                                         |
| <b>Who leads SEND internally?</b>                    | Gemma Robertson is the current SEND designated person; this is not presented as a statutory school SENCO role.                                 |
| <b>What academic support is available?</b>           | Functional Skills English and mathematics support, including BKSB where appropriate, alongside wider individualised learning.                  |
| <b>Is Alternative Acres an exam centre?</b>          | No. External examination/assessment arrangements must be coordinated with the commissioner/approved centre.                                    |
| <b>Does Alternative Acres provide therapy?</b>       | No clinical therapy is implied by ordinary mentoring or emotional support; specialist services remain external unless separately commissioned. |
| <b>Does Alternative Acres provide personal care?</b> | No. Learners must manage toileting independently; routine intimate/personal care is outside the service offer.                                 |
| <b>How is safeguarding recorded?</b>                 | CPOMS is the authoritative safeguarding record.                                                                                                |
| <b>How is progress shared?</b>                       | Through proportionate attendance, engagement and progress reporting/reviews with commissioners and families as appropriate.                    |