



ALTERNATIVE ACRES

Behaviour, Relationships and Positive Support Policy

Academic Year 2026/27

Policy owner	Head of Provision
Head of Provision	Gemma Robertson
DSL	Daun Beresford
Deputy DSL	Gemma Robertson
Inclusion & Engagement Lead	Rachel Archer
Placement ratios	1:1, 1:2 and 1:4
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Alternative Acres understands behaviour as communication. Our approach combines warm, consistent relationships, clear boundaries, reasonable adjustments, positive behaviour support and proportionate responses so that learners can feel safe, regulate, learn and repair relationships.



1. Purpose

This policy explains how Alternative Acres promotes positive behaviour, responds to behaviour of concern and supports learners to develop regulation, relationships, responsibility and readiness for learning.

It is designed for Alternative Acres' farm-based non-school alternative provision and should be read with safeguarding, SEND, anti-bullying, supervision, physical contact/restrictive intervention, online safety and health-and-safety policies.

2. National framework and status

Alternative Acres is a non-school alternative provision. It does not present school-specific statutory behaviour, detention, suspension or permanent-exclusion powers as though they apply to Alternative Acres in exactly the same way.

The DfE voluntary national standards for non-school AP state that providers should have a behaviour policy, support learners to meet behaviour expectations, make reasonable adjustments/adaptations for identified needs, train staff in de-escalation and avoidance of restraint, maintain behaviour records and share significant incidents promptly with commissioners and parents.

DfE statutory suspension/permanent-exclusion guidance updated in July 2026 governs maintained schools, academies/free schools and pupil referral units. Decisions about a learner's school suspension or permanent exclusion remain with the legally responsible school/authority, not Alternative Acres as a non-school AP provider.

3. Principles

Alternative Acres aims for calm, predictable and respectful practice. Staff should seek to understand the need or trigger behind behaviour while remaining clear that understanding behaviour does not mean accepting unsafe or harmful conduct.

- Safety and safeguarding come first.
- Behaviour is communication and should be understood in context.
- Relationships, predictability and co-regulation support change.
- Expectations remain clear, consistent and accessible.
- SEND and disability are considered through reasonable adjustments.
- De-escalation and prevention are preferred to restrictive responses.
- Responses are proportionate and do not shame or humiliate.
- Learners are supported to repair harm and develop skills.
- Significant incidents are recorded and shared appropriately.



- Commissioners are involved when risk, support or placement suitability changes.

4. Behaviour as communication

Behaviour may communicate anxiety, overload, fear, unmet need, pain, frustration, difficulty understanding expectations, previous trauma, sensory need, avoidance, relationship difficulty or a wish for connection/control.

Staff should remain curious about function and context, but must also respond to immediate safety and safeguarding concerns.

5. Expectations

Expectations should be few, clear, positively framed and adapted so that each learner can understand them. Staff should explain expectations explicitly rather than assuming learners already know unwritten social rules.

- Treat people, animals, property and the environment with respect.
- Follow essential safety instructions, particularly around animals, water, tools, vehicles and boundaries.
- Use language and behaviour that does not threaten, discriminate, bully or sexually harass others.
- Allow others to learn and feel safe.
- Ask for help or a break where possible before distress escalates.
- Use agreed devices/technology safely and follow the mobile-phone arrangements.
- Work with staff to repair harm after incidents when ready.

6. Positive behaviour support

Positive behaviour support focuses on preventing avoidable distress, teaching useful skills and changing environmental factors that contribute to behaviour, rather than relying primarily on punishment.

Plans should identify what helps the learner regulate, communicate, engage and recover.

7. Relationships and co-regulation

Consistent trusted relationships are central to Alternative Acres' approach. Staff should model calm tone, predictable responses, respectful language and appropriate boundaries.

Co-regulation may include reducing verbal demand, offering time/space, calm reassurance, movement, sensory strategies, access to a trusted adult or a familiar purposeful activity.



8. SEND and reasonable adjustments

Behaviour expectations and responses must take account of SEND, disability, communication, cognition, sensory processing and emotional/mental-health needs.

Reasonable adjustments may include visual prompts, reduced language, additional processing time, predictable transitions, task adaptation, movement breaks, quieter areas, alternative communication and increased staffing/supervision.

A reasonable adjustment changes how an expectation is supported or accessed; it does not require Alternative Acres to leave serious harm unmanaged.

9. Trauma-informed practice

Staff should avoid unnecessarily confrontational, humiliating or shaming responses. Behaviour may be influenced by previous experiences of rejection, exclusion, abuse, instability or school-related distress.

Trauma-informed practice must remain boundaried and safeguarding-led. It is not a reason to ignore risks to the learner, peers, staff, animals or the public.

10. Prevention and planning

Where behaviour risks are known, staff should use referral information, learner voice, parent/carer knowledge, commissioner information, risk assessments and previous incident learning to plan proactively.

- Identify triggers, warning signs and successful regulation strategies.
- Prepare learners for changes and transitions.
- Match tasks to ability, communication and sensory need.
- Plan staffing and peer groupings carefully.
- Provide meaningful choice where possible.
- Maintain clear environmental and farm-safety boundaries.
- Use predictable routines while allowing individual flexibility.
- Review patterns rather than treating each incident in isolation.

11. Placement ratios and supervision

Alternative Acres uses 1:1, 1:2 and 1:4 placements. The commissioned ratio is the baseline; staffing or activity arrangements may be increased or changed where behaviour, safeguarding, environmental or activity risk requires it.



Staff should avoid leaving known high-risk peer dynamics insufficiently supervised simply because the commissioned ratio has technically been met.

12. Farm-specific behaviour safety

Farm-based education involves animals, water, woodland, tools, gates, vehicles, uneven ground and other hazards. Behaviour that might be relatively low risk in a classroom can become dangerous in these environments.

Staff may immediately stop or adapt an activity where behaviour creates an unacceptable risk. Access can be restored when it is safe and appropriate, with support to understand what needs to change.

13. Animals

Learners must treat animals calmly and humanely and follow staff safety instructions. Deliberate cruelty, frightening/chasing animals, unsafe feeding, entering restricted areas or ignoring safety instructions requires immediate intervention.

Removing a learner temporarily from an animal activity is a safety control, not necessarily a punishment. Staff should seek an alternative regulated activity and review how safe participation can resume.

14. Tools, equipment and vehicles

Tools/equipment may only be used with appropriate permission, instruction and supervision. Unsafe use, threatening use or refusal to follow a critical safety instruction requires the activity to stop.

Vehicle and machinery areas must be managed under site risk assessments. Behaviour support never overrides an immediate need to prevent access to a serious hazard.

15. Lakes, woodland and boundaries

Learners must follow agreed boundaries and instructions around lakes, woodland and site exits. Staff should explain boundaries in accessible language and consider whether anxiety, impulsivity, sensory seeking or escape behaviour increases risk.

Known risks should be reflected in individual supervision/risk planning.



16. Early signs of dysregulation

Staff should learn each learner's early indicators where possible. These may include withdrawal, pacing, repetitive questioning, raised voice, reduced communication, refusal, rapid movement, agitation, fixation, changes in humour or seeking to leave.

Early support is usually more effective than waiting until behaviour escalates.

17. De-escalation

De-escalation should be proportionate to the learner and situation. Staff should avoid crowding, unnecessary audience, argumentative exchanges, rapid repeated instructions or demands that increase distress.

Where safe, give processing time and reduce non-essential demands. Keep language clear and avoid threats that cannot or should not be carried out.

18. Choices and boundaries

Choices can support autonomy and regulation when they are genuine and manageable. Staff should not offer a false choice where safety requires a specific action.

Boundaries should be calm and clear: staff can acknowledge emotion while maintaining that unsafe behaviour cannot continue.

19. Consequences and responses

Responses should be reasonable, proportionate, related where possible to the behaviour, and focused on safety, learning and repair. Alternative Acres does not use humiliation, ridicule, collective punishment or deprivation of basic needs.

Responses should consider the learner's understanding, SEND, intent, impact, previous support, safeguarding context and whether the consequence is likely to help reduce recurrence.

20. Examples of supportive responses

Depending on circumstances, staff may use reminders/reteaching, a reset or change of activity, increased supervision, temporary restriction from a particular hazardous activity, repair/restorative action, risk-plan review, parent/carer/commissioner discussion or targeted support.

A learner should not be deprived of food, drink, toilet access, necessary medication, first aid or a safe environment as a behavioural sanction.



21. Rewards and recognition

Positive recognition should be meaningful and proportionate. Staff may acknowledge effort, regulation, repair, kindness, safe choices, perseverance and engagement.

Recognition should not become manipulative or create unhealthy competition. Individual learners may respond differently to public praise, rewards or attention.

22. Restorative practice

After an incident, restorative discussion may help a learner understand impact, repair relationships and identify what could help next time. It should take place when the learner is sufficiently regulated to participate meaningfully.

Restorative work must not be used to pressure a harmed learner to forgive, minimise abuse or accept responsibility for another person's harmful conduct.

23. Child-on-child abuse and bullying

Behaviour that may constitute bullying, sexual harassment, harmful sexual behaviour, coercive control, violence, exploitation or other child-on-child abuse must be managed under safeguarding and anti-bullying arrangements as well as behaviour support.

Serious harmful behaviour must never be dismissed as banter or simply 'challenging behaviour'.

24. Discriminatory behaviour

Racist, sexist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, disablist or other discriminatory language/behaviour will be challenged. Staff should consider education, safeguarding, impact, pattern and whether targeted support or commissioner involvement is needed.

Alternative Acres should not normalise discriminatory language because a learner has heard or used it previously.

25. Online behaviour

Online conduct outside Alternative Acres can affect safety and relationships during a placement. Where relevant, staff should coordinate with parents/carers and commissioners and follow safeguarding procedures.

Learner phones are managed under the Mobile Phone and Smart Device Policy; online incidents should not be investigated by casually searching personal devices without lawful authority/appropriate process.



26. Physical contact and restrictive intervention

Alternative Acres does not use planned physical restraint as a routine behaviour-management strategy. Staff are expected to prioritise prevention, supervision, de-escalation and environmental safety.

Ordinary appropriate physical contact and proportionate emergency protective action may sometimes be necessary to prevent immediate serious harm. Any such action must follow the Physical Contact, Restrictive Intervention and Emergency Safety Policy.

Alternative Acres does not rely on school-specific statutory reasonable-force powers as though it were a school.

27. Leaving an activity or area

A learner who needs space may be supported to move to a safer agreed area where supervision can be maintained. Staff should distinguish a planned regulation break from unsafe absconding/leaving site.

Staff should not use isolation as punishment. Any separation for immediate safety should be the least restrictive practical option, supervised/monitored appropriately and ended as soon as it is safe.

28. Learner attempting to leave site

If a learner attempts to leave the agreed site boundary, staff should follow the individual risk plan and safeguarding procedures, maintain observation where safe, alert colleagues and consider immediate environmental dangers.

Staff must not automatically use physical restraint to prevent leaving. Emergency protective action is considered only where necessary and proportionate to immediate serious risk.

29. Searching and confiscation

Alternative Acres does not assume the statutory search/confiscation powers given to schools. Staff should use consent, placement agreements, safeguarding procedures, site rules and police support where appropriate.

An item presenting an immediate safety risk should be managed proportionately. Staff should not conduct intrusive searches or use force simply because school guidance would permit an authorised school employee to do so.



30. Prohibited and unsafe items

Learners should not bring weapons, illegal drugs, alcohol, vaping/nicotine products or other items that create an unacceptable safety or safeguarding risk. Medication must follow the medicines policy.

Where an item may be illegal or dangerous, staff should prioritise safety, contact the DSL/Head of Provision and involve police/commissioners/parents as appropriate.

31. Substance-related behaviour

Suspected possession, use, supply or intoxication must be managed under the Drugs/Substance Misuse Policy and safeguarding procedures. Medical emergency action takes priority where required.

32. Recording behaviour

Alternative Acres will maintain proportionate records of significant behaviour incidents and progress. Safeguarding aspects must be recorded on CPOMS, which is the authoritative safeguarding record.

Records should be factual, distinguish observation from opinion and identify triggers, actions, outcome, injuries/damage, safeguarding considerations and follow-up where relevant.

33. Reporting significant incidents

In line with the non-school AP voluntary standards, significant behaviour incidents should be shared promptly with commissioners and parents/carers, ideally on the same day, subject to safeguarding considerations.

Where a plan is in place to address behavioural concerns, progress should be reviewed with the commissioner at least every six weeks, or sooner where risk or placement stability requires it.

34. Parent/carers partnership

Parents/carers can provide valuable information about triggers, communication, regulation and successful strategies. Alternative Acres will seek constructive partnership while maintaining professional safeguarding and safety decisions.

Information about another learner will not be disclosed simply to explain a behaviour response.



35. Commissioner partnership

Alternative Acres will share relevant behaviour progress, incidents, support needs and risk changes with the commissioning school/local authority. The commissioner remains responsible for relevant statutory education decisions.

Where behaviour suggests that the placement specification, staffing, outcomes or support needs require review, Alternative Acres will raise this promptly rather than allowing risk to drift.

36. Suspension, exclusion and placement interruption

Alternative Acres does not issue statutory school suspensions or permanent exclusions. Those legal processes apply to specified school settings and are decisions for the responsible school/authority where applicable.

Alternative Acres should not simply send a learner home as an informal punishment or describe this as a 'suspension'. If an immediate incident means a session cannot safely continue, the decision must be safeguarding/risk-led, communicated promptly to the parent/carer and commissioner, recorded, and followed by a review of how education and the placement will safely continue.

Repeated or serious risk may require an urgent commissioner-led placement review. Alternative Acres should seek planned transition/alternative arrangements rather than unilateral abrupt termination wherever reasonably possible.

37. Placement suitability and ending a placement

Where Alternative Acres believes it can no longer safely or suitably meet a learner's needs, it will provide clear evidence to the commissioner and seek an urgent review.

Ending a commissioned placement should not be used as a behavioural sanction. Decisions should consider safeguarding, SEND/EHCP needs, educational continuity, the learner's views and the commissioner's duties.

38. Serious incidents and emergency response

Where behaviour creates immediate danger, staff should prioritise life and safety, call for assistance and contact emergency services where required. Serious incidents may require safeguarding referral, police involvement, medical assessment and commissioner notification.

Staff should not delay emergency action in order to complete behaviour paperwork.



39. Post-incident support

Following a significant incident, Alternative Acres should consider the wellbeing of the learner, other learners and staff. Debriefing should be proportionate and should not require a dysregulated learner to immediately analyse their behaviour.

Risk assessments, supervision, communication plans and support strategies should be updated where learning indicates this is necessary.

40. Staff wellbeing

Behaviour incidents can affect staff wellbeing. Staff should be able to seek support, debrief appropriately and report injury, threats or unsafe conditions without being expected to tolerate harm as 'part of the job'.

41. Staff training

Staff should receive training proportionate to their role in safeguarding, SEND, behaviour support, de-escalation, professional boundaries, health and safety and emergency procedures.

Training should reinforce Alternative Acres' no-planned-restraint approach and the importance of recognising when behaviour is actually a safeguarding concern.

42. Learner voice

Learners should be involved in understanding what helps them regulate, learn and feel safe. Their views should inform support plans and post-incident learning where appropriate.

Learner voice does not mean that safety boundaries are optional, but it can help make them understandable and achievable.

43. Monitoring and quality assurance

The Head of Provision and DSL should review patterns in significant behaviour, including triggers, locations, peer combinations, discriminatory themes, restrictive responses, placement ratios and safeguarding links.

Learning should inform risk assessments, staff development, commissioning discussions and the Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Continuous Improvement Policy.



44. Related policies

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2026/27; Anti-Bullying and Peer Harm Policy 2026/27; SEND and Inclusion Policy 2026/27; Supervision of Learners Policy 2026/27; Physical Contact, Restrictive Intervention and Emergency Safety Policy 2026/27; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility Policy 2026/27; Drugs/Substance Misuse Policy; Online Safety and E-Safety Policy 2026/27; Mobile Phone and Smart Device Policy 2026/27; Health, Safety and Farm Site Safety Policy 2026/27; Attendance and Absence Policy 2026/27.

45. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner following a serious incident, safeguarding learning, material change to the provision, commissioner requirement or relevant national guidance.

46. Quick staff response guide

Learner becoming dysregulated	Reduce non-essential demand, use calm communication, offer regulation support and maintain safety.
Unsafe behaviour around animal/tool/lake	Stop or adapt the activity immediately; move to safety and review before access resumes.
Behaviour may be bullying/sexual harm/abuse	Follow safeguarding and Anti-Bullying/Peer Harm procedures; do not treat solely as behaviour.
Learner needs space	Support a safe, supervised regulation break; do not use isolation as punishment.
Learner tries to leave site	Follow individual risk/safeguarding plan; maintain observation where safe and respond to immediate hazards.
Staff considering physical intervention	Use prevention/de-escalation first; only proportionate emergency protective action for immediate serious harm under the restrictive-intervention policy.
Significant incident	Record promptly; safeguarding information on CPOMS; inform parent/carer and commissioner appropriately, ideally same day.
Repeated behaviour concern	Review triggers, SEND adjustments, risk plan, staffing and commissioner support rather than repeating ineffective sanctions.
Session cannot safely continue	Treat as an exceptional safety/safeguarding decision, not an informal suspension; notify commissioner/parent and plan next steps.
Placement may no longer be suitable	Request urgent commissioner review; do not use placement termination as punishment.

