



ALTERNATIVE ACRES

SEND and Inclusion Policy

Academic Year 2026/27

Policy owner	Head of Provision
Head of Provision / current SEND designated person	Gemma Robertson
DSL	Daun Beresford
Deputy DSL	Gemma Robertson
Inclusion & Engagement Lead	Rachel Archer
Safeguarding record	CPOMS
Reviewed	01/09/2026
Next review	01/09/2027 or sooner following significant guidance, commissioning or service changes

Alternative Acres provides individualised 1:1, 1:2 and 1:4 placements. Support is based on the learner's needs, commissioned placement and risk assessment, not diagnosis alone.



1. Purpose

This policy explains how Alternative Acres supports learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including learners with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, and how inclusive practice is embedded within the provision.

Alternative Acres recognises that many learners referred to the provision have experienced barriers to attendance, engagement or learning and may have overlapping SEND, SEMH, anxiety, neurodiversity, communication or safeguarding needs.

2. Status of Alternative Acres

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

Commissioning schools and local authorities retain their statutory responsibilities for learners, including responsibilities arising from the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND framework and EHC plans. Alternative Acres works collaboratively with commissioners and families to deliver the provision that has been agreed with it.

DfE alternative provision guidance applies to independent providers delivering AP, while the DfE voluntary national standards set non-statutory expectations specifically for non-school AP. Alternative Acres uses these as important quality and safeguarding benchmarks.

3. Leadership for SEND and inclusion

Gemma Robertson is currently Alternative Acres' designated person for SEND and has extensive experience supporting learners with SEN. This is an internal Alternative Acres role and should not be confused with the statutory school SENCO role.

Alternative Acres intends to recruit an experienced SEND lead as the provision develops. Rachel Archer, Inclusion & Engagement Lead, supports learner engagement and inclusion within her role. Daun Beresford, DSL, provides safeguarding oversight where SEND and vulnerability intersect with safeguarding.

4. Admissions and suitability

Alternative Acres considers each referral individually. A diagnosis or EHC plan does not automatically make a placement suitable or unsuitable.



Before agreeing a placement, Alternative Acres should receive sufficient information to understand the learner's needs, risks, communication, medical considerations, current education arrangements, outcomes sought and commissioned staffing ratio.

Alternative Acres must be open about the service it can and cannot safely provide. It does not provide personal care or toileting assistance. Learners attending Alternative Acres are expected to manage their toileting independently.

5. Placement ratios

Alternative Acres offers 1:1, 1:2 and 1:4 commissioned placements. The appropriate arrangement is agreed according to the referral, learner needs, compatibility, intended outcomes and risk assessment.

A commissioned ratio is a baseline arrangement rather than a guarantee that every activity can safely operate at that ratio. Supervision may be increased, activities adapted or groupings reduced where risk or learner need requires it.

Alternative Acres will not routinely dilute an agreed placement into a higher learner-to-staff ratio without appropriate review and commissioner agreement.

6. Understanding individual need

Alternative Acres seeks to understand the whole learner rather than relying solely on labels or diagnosis. Information is gathered from the referral and, where available, the learner, parent/carer, school, local authority and relevant professionals.

Support should reflect strengths, interests, communication preferences, sensory needs, emotional regulation, prior experiences, aspirations and barriers to learning.

- Strengths, interests and aspirations.
- Primary and additional SEND needs.
- Communication method and processing time.
- Sensory profile and environmental triggers.
- SEMH, anxiety and regulation needs.
- Safeguarding vulnerabilities and known risks.
- Medical information relevant to attendance/activities.
- What has and has not worked in previous settings.
- Desired outcomes and review arrangements.



7. EHC plans

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

Alternative Acres contributes information about attendance, engagement, progress and provision to the commissioner or local authority when reasonably requested, including information that may support statutory review processes.

Alternative Acres does not independently amend an EHC plan or determine the local authority's statutory provision. Concerns that agreed provision is not being delivered, is no longer suitable, or needs review should be raised with the commissioner/local authority.

8. Reasonable adjustments and accessibility

Alternative Acres aims to identify and implement reasonable, practical adjustments that reduce disability-related barriers to accessing its service. Adjustments are considered in the context of the learner, the nature of the provision, effectiveness, practicality, safety and available resources.

Adjustments may relate to communication, timetable, pace, transitions, sensory environment, activity choice, teaching approach, equipment or how information is presented.

An adjustment will not be treated as reasonable where it would fundamentally change the nature of the service or require Alternative Acres to provide a service it does not offer, such as routine personal care/toileting assistance. Alternative arrangements should then be discussed with the commissioner.

- Visual or simplified instructions and reduced language load.
- Additional processing time and predictable routines.
- Planned movement or regulation breaks.
- Quieter working areas where available.
- Gradual introduction to activities or transitions.
- Alternative ways to communicate or demonstrate learning.
- Adaptation of tasks/equipment where safe and practicable.
- Changes to grouping or proximity of supervision where required.

9. Teaching and learning

Learning is adapted to the learner's starting point, needs, interests and intended outcomes. Alternative Acres uses practical, relational and farm-based opportunities alongside academic learning where appropriate.



Functional Skills English and maths may be supported through BKSBS and planned teaching activities. Staff should break learning into manageable steps, use clear language, check understanding and provide alternative ways to engage or demonstrate learning where appropriate.

10. Communication needs

Staff should understand how each learner communicates and how anxiety, autism, selective mutism, speech/language needs or dysregulation may affect communication.

A learner must not be assumed to be refusing, non-compliant or disengaged simply because they cannot respond verbally in a particular moment. Staff should use agreed communication approaches and allow appropriate processing time.

11. SEMH, anxiety and emotionally based barriers

Alternative Acres recognises that anxiety, trauma, SEMH needs and previous educational experiences can affect attendance, trust, behaviour and engagement.

Staff use relationship-based support, predictable routines, positive behaviour support and de-escalation. Expectations may be introduced gradually without losing sight of agreed educational and developmental outcomes.

12. Sensory and environmental needs

The farm environment can offer valuable opportunities for regulation and engagement but may also present sensory challenges such as noise, smells, weather, mud, animals, machinery or changing conditions.

Individual risk assessment and planning should consider sensory needs, suitable clothing/equipment, access to calmer spaces, transitions and alternative activities where reasonably practicable.

13. Behaviour as communication

Staff should consider whether behaviour may indicate unmet need, anxiety, sensory overload, communication difficulty, fear, safeguarding concern or an unsuitable demand/environment.

This does not mean unsafe behaviour is ignored. Staff should maintain clear boundaries, protect safety, use de-escalation and review the underlying need and support plan.



14. Learner voice

Learners should be supported to express their views about what helps them learn, what they find difficult, their goals and their experience of Alternative Acres. Communication methods should be adapted where needed.

Learner voice can inform risk assessments, support strategies, timetable planning, reviews and transitions, while recognising that safeguarding and safety decisions remain the responsibility of adults.

15. Parent/carers and commissioner partnership

Alternative Acres works collaboratively with parents/carers and commissioners and shares relevant information about attendance, engagement, progress, concerns and changes in need.

Where views differ, decisions should remain centred on the learner's safety, assessed needs, commissioned provision and Alternative Acres' ability to deliver the service safely.

16. Progress and outcomes

Progress is broader than academic attainment alone. Depending on the placement, meaningful progress may include improved engagement, attendance at commissioned sessions, communication, confidence, emotional regulation, independence, relationships, practical skills, English/maths development and preparation for next steps.

Records should be proportionate and useful, supporting review of whether the placement is meeting its intended outcomes.

17. Safeguarding and SEND

Learners with SEND can face additional safeguarding vulnerabilities, including communication barriers, dependency on adults, social isolation, bullying, exploitation and difficulty recognising or reporting abuse.

Staff must not assume that changes in behaviour, distress or communication are simply part of a learner's SEND. Safeguarding concerns must be reported to Daun Beresford (DSL) or Gemma Robertson (Deputy DSL) and recorded on CPOMS.

18. Online safety

SEND and communication needs are considered in online-safety teaching and supervision. Learners using Alternative Acres-owned laptops are directly supervised and use is limited to planned educational purposes and approved resources.



Staff should consider vulnerability to grooming, coercion, scams, harmful content, sexual imagery, cyberbullying and exploitation when supporting individual learners.

19. Medical needs and personal care

Medical needs are managed under the First Aid, Medical Conditions and Medicines Policy and any agreed individual arrangements.

Alternative Acres does not provide personal care or toileting assistance. This service limitation must be considered at referral and review. Emergency first aid is distinct from routine personal or intimate care and will be provided within staff competence when required.

20. Preparing for adulthood and independence

Where appropriate to age and placement goals, Alternative Acres supports skills that contribute to adulthood and independence, including communication, confidence, decision-making, practical responsibility, employability awareness, relationships, community participation and preparation for further education, training or work.

Support should be aspirational while remaining realistic and individualised.

21. Transitions and reintegration

Transitions into, within and from Alternative Acres should be planned carefully, particularly for learners with anxiety, SEND or previous disrupted placements.

Alternative Acres will share relevant information with the commissioner and contribute to transition or reintegration planning where requested. The destination and statutory decisions remain the responsibility of the relevant commissioner/local authority/school as applicable.

22. When needs change

A placement that was initially suitable may require review if needs, risk, medical circumstances, behaviour, attendance or required support changes significantly.

Alternative Acres will discuss concerns with the parent/carer and commissioner and may recommend increased support, amended outcomes, specialist input, different arrangements or review of placement suitability. Safety and the learner's best interests remain central.



23. Staff knowledge and development

Staff training and CPD should reflect the learners being supported. This may include autism, learning disability, communication, SEMH, anxiety, positive behaviour support, safeguarding vulnerabilities and other role-specific learning.

Staff should seek guidance where they do not understand a learner's need or where a requested intervention falls outside their competence.

24. Information and confidentiality

Relevant SEND information is shared with staff who need it to support the learner safely and effectively. Information must be handled in accordance with data-protection and safeguarding requirements.

CPOMS is the authoritative safeguarding record. Routine educational/SEND information should be recorded through the appropriate Alternative Acres learner records; safeguarding concerns must be recorded on CPOMS.

25. Complaints and concerns

Parents/carers, learners and commissioners can raise concerns about SEND support through Alternative Acres' usual communication and complaints arrangements. Safeguarding concerns are managed through the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy rather than delayed through a complaints process.

26. Related policies

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2026/27; Admissions Policy; Needs and Risk Assessment procedures; Supervision of Learners Policy 2026/27; Behaviour Policy; Attendance and Absence Policy 2026/27; Online Safety and E-Safety Policy 2026/27; First Aid, Medical Conditions and Medicines Policy 2026/27; Staff Training, Induction and Professional Development Policy 2026/27; Equalities Policy; Teaching and Learning Policy; Careers Policy; Off-Site Visits Policy.

27. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner following significant changes to SEND or equality guidance, commissioning requirements, Alternative Acres' service offer or the needs of learners attending the provision.



28. Quick staff guide

Learner has an EHC plan	Read the relevant information provided and deliver the agreed Alternative Acres element; raise gaps/concerns with Head of Provision/commissioner.
Learner struggles to communicate	Use their agreed communication approach, reduce pressure and allow processing time; do not assume refusal.
Learner becomes dysregulated	Prioritise safety, use de-escalation, consider underlying need/trigger and review support/risk where needed.
Adjustment is requested	Consider whether it is effective, practical, safe and reasonable; escalate if it changes the service or staffing required.
Learner needs personal care/toileting assistance	Alternative Acres does not provide this service; escalate to Head of Provision and commissioner.
SEND presentation raises safeguarding concern	Do not attribute it automatically to SEND; tell DSL/Deputy DSL and record on CPOMS.