

# Alternative provision

A report on the findings from the first year of a three-year survey

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In 2011, Ofsted published a survey report on the use of off-site alternative provision by schools and pupil referral units. The survey identified successful features of alternative provision and commented on a range of weaknesses that inspectors had found during their visits. As a result of the survey's findings, the Department for Education commissioned Ofsted to carry out another survey on the same topic. This report summarises the findings from the recent survey.

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## Introduction

Alternative provision can be defined as something in which a young person participates as part of their regular timetable, away from the site of the school or the pupil referral unit where they are enrolled, and not led by school staff.<sup>1,2</sup> In 2011, Ofsted published a survey about schools' and pupil referral units' use of off-site alternative provision.<sup>3,4</sup> The report analysed what made some alternative provision successful for students and commented on a range of weaknesses that inspectors had found during their visits. As a result of the survey's findings and the subsequent review, 'Improving alternative provision', the Department for Education commissioned Ofsted to carry out another survey on the same topic, this time over three years, starting in September 2012.<sup>5</sup> This interim report summarises interim findings.

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) visited 58 secondary schools and 168 of the off-site alternative providers used by the schools.<sup>6</sup> After each visit, feedback letters to the schools were published on Ofsted's website.<sup>7</sup> Ofsted has also used the findings of the visits to publish good practice case studies.<sup>8</sup>

It is not possible to make a direct comparison between the findings from the first survey and the interim findings from the current survey, as different schools have been visited. Overall, however, the visits carried out in 2012/13 indicated that many aspects of alternative provision are improving, most notably:

- the way in which schools are commissioning and selecting the provision to meet the needs of their students
- the use made of partnership working between groups of schools, and between schools and local authorities, to find, organise and monitor alternative provision<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This includes maintained schools and academies.

<sup>2</sup> See further information section for details about what alternative provision is and how it is used by schools.

<sup>3</sup> Pupil referral units are a type of 'alternative provision', and some of the schools surveyed in 2011 and for the current survey use pupil referral unit placements for some of their students. Pupil referral units themselves also use other types of alternative provision for their own students to extend the curriculum or to help to keep them engaged in education.

<sup>4</sup> *Alternative provision* (100233), Ofsted, 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100233](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100233).

<sup>5</sup> C Taylor, 'Improving alternative provision', Department for Education, 2012; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-alternative-provision](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-alternative-provision).

<sup>6</sup> The first year of this survey concentrated on mainstream secondary schools and their alternative providers. Pupil referral units and the providers they use are being included in the second year of the survey.

<sup>7</sup> A list of the schools visited can be found at the back of this report.

<sup>8</sup> Alternative provision: good practice, Ofsted; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/search/apachesolr\\_search/alternative%20provision%20good%20practice](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/search/apachesolr_search/alternative%20provision%20good%20practice).

<sup>9</sup> 'Schools' in this report includes academies.

- the extent to which schools visit the providers before and during the placements to check their safety and suitability
- the quality of information that schools give to providers about the students' needs.

Weaknesses still remain. Not all schools are making sure that students do not miss out on English and mathematics teaching. When students miss lessons they find it very difficult to catch up. As a result, they often underachieve and do not gain the qualifications they should. In addition:

- not enough schools are evaluating the impact of alternative provision on the outcomes for the students, particularly academic outcomes
- the reporting of students' progress by the provider to the school is often weak – reports are too brief, do not contain important information, or are not linked to the school's assessment or reporting systems
- occasionally, accommodation at the alternative providers is unsuitable
- not all schools are ensuring that students attending alternative provision receive a full-time education
- schools are occasionally using providers that should be registered as independent schools or pupil referral units, but are not.

## Interim findings

### The schools' use of alternative provision

1. The number of students attending off-site alternative provision from the schools visited ranged from two to 47 students. Where numbers were larger, schools had sometimes broadened their use of off-site provision to enhance the vocational curriculum and were offering it to more students. Many of the students who attended alternative provision were identified by their schools as having special educational needs, as noted in the 2011 survey. The vast majority of students were from Year 10 and Year 11 but some schools were using alternative provision for a small number of Year 9 students too. The placements varied in length from half a day to five days a week, with the majority being for one or two days.

### The providers

2. The type and make-up of the 168 providers visited varied widely. Providers included colleges; workplaces; charities; work-based learning providers; special schools and academies; free schools; pupil referral units and units which were run by a group of local schools for students who were in danger of being excluded. Some catered for large numbers of students from many schools, others for very small numbers. Some had a very specific focus, others taught

many of the subjects found in any school curriculum. There were providers that were part of a chain of providers, and very small one-off establishments.

3. Below are seven examples of the providers visited by HMI as part of this survey, illustrating the range of provision used by the schools.
  - The organisation is a registered charity. Each student is offered between one and four days extended work experience each week. Vocational courses are offered: from entry level to BTEC awards, and certificates and diplomas in a range of subjects. The organisation also provides core subject teaching from Entry Level to Level 2. There are 160 part-time students. The organisation caters for learners aged 14 to 16 from 41 different schools.
  - A registered charity set up an alternative provision centre. It works in partnership with several charities and local authorities and is intended to be an alternative to permanent exclusion. The work carried out focuses strongly on boxing.
  - A national chain of 'fitness academies' aimed at engaging young people in education through sport and fitness coaching qualifications. It is aimed at the 14 to 16 age range. The centre visited had 12 students on roll.
  - A small independently owned garage which specialises in car electronics; it is run by the owner and one employee. The garage caters for one student who attends for one day a week as part of an extended work placement.
  - A national education charity with centres across the country. The aim is to re-engage disaffected young people in learning and raise their self-esteem. The provision visited is small, with seven to eight students on roll, a centre manager and another tutor. The standard model is for students to be on a 12-week programme for two days each week, and at school for the rest of the time.
  - A charity-run training provider attached to a small local radio station. The provider trains presenters and also offers placements, especially for students who have issues with self-confidence and communication. Currently, five students attend part-time from different schools in the area – some for only half a day each week.
  - A farm is run as a community interest concern. It accepts 40 to 45 students each week from six schools. All are students aged 14 to 16 years. Up to 12 young people attend at any one time.
  
4. As Ofsted found in 2011, many of the providers were never inspected routinely as they did not meet the criteria which would require them to register as an independent school or a pupil referral unit.<sup>10</sup> Several providers, however, told

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<sup>10</sup> A provider of alternative provision should be registered as an independent school if it caters full-time for five or more students of compulsory school age; or one such student who is looked after or has a statement of special educational needs.

inspectors that they were planning to register as an independent school so that they could expand their work with young people; for example to working with more young people with a statement or who are looked after, or catering for students full time. Four schools were using providers that should have been registered but were not. These providers were referred to the Department for Education and have since begun the registration process.

## **Positive aspects of the schools' use of alternative provision**

5. After each survey visit to a school, inspectors write a feedback letter, which is published on Ofsted's website.<sup>11</sup> The following aspects were frequently noted in letters as positive features of schools' use of alternative provision:
  - good commissioning of the alternative provision, with provision being sought and selected to meet students' individual needs, rather than students just being sent to the places that are readily available
  - partnership working with the local authority, other schools and different organisations helping the process of commissioning and the range and quality of provision being used
  - the quality of information about the students' needs given to providers by schools being good or better.
  - schools giving good support to providers and providers finding the support useful
  - useful qualifications with clear progression routes being gained through alternative provision; the use of alternative provision improving the outcomes for students – particularly attendance and behaviour at school and skills needed for employment
  - students themselves reflecting positively on the impact of their experiences, recognising the improvements in their confidence and self-esteem, their ability to take more responsibility, their employability skills, motivation, and their understanding of the value of learning.

## **Recurring areas for improvement**

6. Each published letter sets the schools areas for improvement. Below is a summary of the most commonly occurring weaknesses in provision.
  - The quality of reporting from providers to schools including:
    - not enough detail about academic progress

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<sup>11</sup> Ofsted website;

[www.ofsted.gov.uk/search/apachesolr\\_search/alternative%20provision%20good%20practice](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/search/apachesolr_search/alternative%20provision%20good%20practice). A list of schools visited appears at the back of this report.

- reviews of students' progress being too infrequent
  - a lack of consistency in assessing students at school and off site
  - the absence of reporting on employability skills and improving target-setting
  - the skills that students learnt at alternative provision not being used in their school work.
- The monitoring of the quality of provision including:
- inconsistency in evaluating different placements
  - senior leaders not monitoring teaching and learning at the placements effectively or at all
  - not looking closely enough at students' outcomes from the alternative provision to ensure that learning is taking place
  - needing to improve the monitoring of how well workplace skills were being developed
- Insufficient pre-placement information given to providers or students, particularly:
- the lack of information given to providers to ensure that students' needs were identified and planned for, in particular their literacy and numeracy needs
  - students not being provided with relevant information about their intended course or apprenticeship.
- The evaluation of the impact of the provision on the outcomes for students including:
- no comparison of achievement and attendance of the alternative provision group with their starting points, and with others in the school
  - not evaluating the employment or training for the alternative provision cohort and making comparisons with other relevant cohorts
  - not taking into account the outcomes for students when evaluating the value for money provided by the placements.
- Governors' knowledge of alternative provision, particularly:
- schools not reporting to governors on the performance of students placed on alternative provision as a discrete group so that governors could question and challenge as needed
  - governors not having the information they needed to be able to consider whether alternative provision was giving good value for money.

- Health and safety and safeguarding including:
  - schools not scrutinising regularly the health and safety audits and quality reports about a provider
  - schools not always making providers aware of their own policies and procedures about safeguarding and health and safety.

7. The following sections give more details about the key aspects above, and evaluate what has improved and what still needs to change.

## Setting up placements

### Finding and commissioning

8. In 2011 Ofsted reported that:

‘The process of finding and commissioning alternative provision varied widely among the schools and units visited. Local authorities played a coordinating role for only nine of the 39 schools and units. The others either worked in partnership with nearby schools or units to find the provision, or found it for themselves.’<sup>12</sup>

9. In the first year of the new survey, the schools visited were still using one or more of these three methods to find alternative provision. However, over half of the schools reported that their local authority had a database and quality assurance processes which they used to help them to find suitable placements for their students, compared to just under a quarter in 2011. Partnership working was strong in around a quarter of the other schools visited, with schools working with others in the area to find provision. These partnerships had usually agreed how decisions would be made about whether the provision was safe and suitable, and sometimes they jointly employed staff to carry out this role and to support students. A few schools worked by themselves to find placements for their students.
10. Eight of the schools visited reported to inspectors that they had cut back considerably on their use of alternative provision. They had either adapted their curriculum to make it more suitable for the whole range of learners, or had set up their own version of alternative provision on site. One headteacher, for example, described how local headteachers had visited one of the main providers and judged it to be poor. He withdrew all his students from this provision, and this was a spur to reviewing the entire approach to alternative provision. The vast majority of students were now spending all their time at school, with a strong emphasis on attaining English and mathematics qualifications as well as a range of others. An example of a school that

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<sup>12</sup> *Alternative provision* (100233) p7, Ofsted, 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100233](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100233).

developed a vocational skills centre in partnership with other schools, in order to take firmer control of all its alternative provision can be found below.<sup>13</sup>

11. Where schools used a local authority database to select their provision, there was still some over-reliance on the authority's information. Ofsted's 2011 survey found that not all of the schools had visited the placements to check their suitability themselves prior to deciding to send their students there. Twenty of the 61 providers surveyed reported that no-one from the school or the unit had visited the provision prior to the student starting. Only 12 of the 168 providers visited for this survey reported that schools had not visited them. However this indicates that a few schools are still not taking sufficient responsibility for placing their students on alternative provision. Some of the best practice seen was when schools and the local authority worked in partnership, as illustrated below.

In one school, placements were checked by the local authority's alternative curriculum team as part of a service level agreement. Documentation showed that these checks were thorough and comprehensive. This was confirmed by the placements' leaders during the inspector's visits. The school's deputy headteacher also visited all providers annually to look at safeguarding, health and safety, qualifications of staff, suitability of the environment and accommodation. This ensured that the school built on the local authority's information but took full responsibility for sending their students to suitable placements. Competition in the alternative provision market in the area meant that providers were keen to reach and maintain high standards in order to keep (and expand) their business. The school had rejected a provider in the past.

12. The vast majority of schools visited, however, had arranged for students to visit the placement for an introductory or taster session before the placement was finalised. This is an important part of ensuring that the placement is valued by the student and that the student feels part of the decision-making process. In a third of the schools visited, parents and carers also visited the placement with their child, often being present for the whole of the introductory session.

### **Informing the placements about students' needs**

13. Ofsted's 2011 survey commented, 'The information about the students that some of the schools and units gave to the providers was weak.'<sup>14</sup> A much more favourable picture of this aspect emerged during the first year of the current survey. In the schools visited during the first year, 47 of the 58 provided the

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<sup>13</sup> High-quality alternative provision through developing a company, Hawley High School, Ofsted; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130243](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130243).

<sup>14</sup> *Alternative provision* (100233) p7, Ofsted, 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100233](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100233).

placements with appropriate information about the students' needs and abilities, including any special educational needs. Six of the schools did not give the providers enough relevant information. Five schools did provide information, but gave only what they were asked to give by the different providers, leading to some gaps and inconsistencies. Discussions with the 168 providers visited supported this finding – the vast majority said that they had received appropriate written information from schools. Ten providers had received verbal information only, a real weakness, of which five were working with the same school.

## Monitoring and evaluation

14. The responsibility for planning and monitoring alternative provision in the schools visited most commonly lay with a senior leader, usually an assistant headteacher. In a few schools, an inclusion leader or special educational needs coordinator was responsible. In some schools, the senior leader responsible for the alternative provision had one or more team members who carried out the practical aspects of the work, such as liaising with providers and visiting students.
15. In some schools, the person responsible for planning and monitoring was also responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the alternative provision. A less common but better model was where another senior leader had this responsibility. They were able to give a more objective view based on the evidence provided by their colleague, because they were not involved on a day-to-day basis. Schools that worked within a partnership to organise their alternative provision, either with other schools or the local authority, usually involved members of the partnership's team in monitoring and evaluation.
16. The quality of monitoring was identified as an aspect needing improvement in around half of the schools visited. Weaknesses were different from one school to another but the following common issues were identified:
  - no monitoring by the school of the quality of teaching and learning at the placements
  - not monitoring outcomes for students closely enough to ensure that learning was taking place at the placements
  - senior leaders not quality assuring the placements well enough
  - the school not visiting the placements frequently enough
  - inconsistency in monitoring of different placements used by the same school.
17. Evaluating the effectiveness of alternative provision by checking on outcomes for the students was also an area needing improvement. This included the evaluation and comparison of achievement and attendance of the alternative

provision group. Often, there were no comparisons of groups attending alternative provision to ensure that courses were having a positive impact. There was also not enough evaluation of the impact of alternative provision on helping students to find relevant training or employment post-16. Finally, evaluation did not always consider value for money.

18. Schools' monitoring and evaluation were best where the school had:

- agreed with each of its providers exactly what information would be provided and made sure that this was the same for each provider
- made sure that reports included information about students' progress, not just behaviour and attendance
- ensured that all of this information was received frequently and at suitable times to inform the school's own tracking and reporting
- developed a system to bring together information from the placements with information about the rest of the students' progress in school and act upon what this information was showing.

One school's highly detailed systems for tracking and monitoring students' attitudes and behaviour allowed it to intervene early and to prevent problems from escalating. Weekly reports from providers gave detailed summative accounts of pupils' weekly attendance, their attitudes to learning and their progress towards academic and placement-specific targets. This information was discussed by academic and pastoral managers and action was taken where needed. The system also allowed the school to be aware of positive attitudes and progress and to praise and encourage the student accordingly. Finally, it allowed staff to inform parents and carers how their child was progressing.

19. In the best examples, the headteacher and governors took a close interest in the progress being made by the students on alternative provision placements. In one school, for example, an assistant headteacher held overall responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the alternative provision, including assessing the quality of teaching, which the school viewed as very important. The school also had senior leaders who were specifically responsible for analysing achievement data, and who contributed to the evaluation of how well these students were achieving overall. The headteacher was very knowledgeable about this aspect of the school's work and asked probing questions about how good the overall provision for these students actually was. As he said:

'It's crucial. Would you never go to a certain classroom in your actual school? Would there be a subject or a group that you never ask about and don't know how they're getting on?'

Governors in this school had been given specific information about the placements in terms of reasons, expectations and costs, and expected to be updated frequently about the students' progress.

20. The following case study illustrates the careful way in which another school matched courses to students' needs, then carefully monitored and tracked students' progress to ensure the best outcomes.

The school fully recognised that their students who needed alternative provision to help them to re-engage had a range of academic abilities, so accreditation offered through the placements ranged from Entry Level to Level 2. The school used value-added data to set the targets in all subjects and courses involved in alternative placements. They set up a tracking grid within the school's own tracking system which enabled the student's progress to be tracked towards the target grade in the same way that it was done in any other subject.

Providers carried out assessments once a term and emailed the results to the school, which transferred the data to its tracking grid. By doing this, the school was able to track the progress of each student towards the target grade in every subject (including those on alternative placements) and could easily see if the student was on track, ahead or falling behind. When students were not making enough progress on their alternative provision courses, a number of interventions could take place in order to help them catch up:

- meetings between school staff and the provider
- reviewing the nature and effectiveness of support from teaching assistants
- providing additional support
- providing 'catch-up sessions' supported by members of school staff.

The impact of the alternative provision and this close monitoring was very evident. In 2012 every student who attended alternative provision placements went on to further education, employment or training. A considerable number gained apprenticeships in their chosen subject.

## Achievement and progression

### English and mathematics qualifications

21. Qualification data was collected from 54 of the schools visited. This covered outcomes for approximately 700 Year 11 students who had attended alternative provision. Over four fifths of these students gained an accreditation in English and just under four fifths did so in mathematics. Nearly three fifths gained a GCSE in English and over half in mathematics; approximately a quarter attained a grade C or above in each subject. Over a quarter of students gained

accreditation in qualifications other than GCSE in English, and a quarter did so in mathematics, usually in either Functional Skills or Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

22. The make-up of the cohorts attending alternative provision varied quite considerably from school to school, as did the outcomes in English and mathematics. In some schools, very small numbers of students attended alternative provision. These students usually had the most complex needs. Other schools arranged alternative provision for much larger numbers as part of their curriculum. Direct comparison of results between schools is therefore difficult. Nevertheless, the examples below illustrate some of the variations in outcomes between schools. In the first three examples, almost all the students attained GCSEs in English and mathematics.
- School A – from 39 students, 19 gained grade C or above in English and 21 gained grade C or above in mathematics. Virtually all gained a GCSE in mathematics and English.
  - School B – all 13 students gained GCSE passes in mathematics and English. Eight students in English and six in mathematics gained higher grades.
  - School C – all eight students gained GCSE passes in mathematics and English. Five passes in English and four in mathematics were at grade C or above.
23. In contrast, the following examples show low attainment in English and mathematics for students who attended alternative provision.
- School D – from 25 students, only five gained GCSEs in mathematics and English; one gained a grade C or above in mathematics and one did so in English.
  - School E – from 16 students, none gained a GCSE in English, while eight gained grade D to G passes in mathematics; none were at grade C or above.
  - School F – from nine students only one gained a GCSE grade D to G in English and six gained similar grades in mathematics; no student attained higher grades.
24. With some exceptions, schools were generally ensuring that students gained some accreditation in mathematics and English. The issue is whether the examination results reflect the capabilities of all the students. Ofsted will be considering this aspect more closely in the next phase of the survey.

### **Accreditation gained from the placements**

25. The vast majority of students who attended alternative provision placements in the schools visited in 2012/13 gained at least one qualification from their placement. Many achieved more than one. There were occasional exceptions where no accreditation was offered by the placement, or the students did not

succeed in gaining a qualification. In the best examples, the accreditation was at an appropriately challenging level for the student and led clearly to the next steps. Unlike the finding of Ofsted's 2011 survey on alternative provision, where inspectors noted over 100 different qualifications being used by providers, the vast majority of qualifications were those that would be recognised by an employer or a college (even if they do not count towards the Department for Education's performance tables). BTEC qualifications and City & Guilds qualifications were widely used to accredit work-related and vocational courses such as construction, sport and leisure, hair and beauty and public services; there was some use of National Vocational Qualifications. Some students gained GCSE and Entry Level qualifications, particularly if they were studying English and mathematics at their alternative provision placements. There was occasional use of the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network.

### **Links between alternative provision and the next steps for students**

26. Schools frequently saw the off-site alternative provision courses that they had set up as key in helping to keep students in education, employment or training when they reached the end of Year 11. Almost all the schools saw becoming a young person who was not in education, employment or training (NEET) as a likely outcome for at least some of the students prior to them becoming involved in alternative provision. Schools' records showed that they generally met the aim of ensuring that the students went on to education, employment or training post-16. In one school, for example, 37 students from a cohort of 38 who had attended alternative provision were in education, employment or training at the end of Year 11. However, in the six schools that did not plan accreditation well to give students a clear pathway to the next steps, they had not thought much beyond the aim of 'avoiding NEETS'. In these schools, too much emphasis was placed on simply keeping the student from becoming excluded or long-term absent, placing them on courses that were simply available rather than ones that were suitably challenging or linked to future pathways.
27. In around two thirds of the schools, the accreditation used formed a clear pathway to the next steps in education, employment or training for the students. Many schools had worked with local colleges and their own sixth forms to ensure that the qualifications were relevant and that Level 1 courses would prepare students well for Level 2 or 3 courses in the same or related areas. In the best examples, planning for the future was something that was discussed with students before the placement even began, as illustrated below.

In this school, very clear pathways were evident. The planning of programmes was strong, starting with a student's application for a place and production of a portfolio on the vocational area selected, and was supported with careers action plans. There was a high rate of progression into college courses and apprenticeships. Students themselves were clear

about their progression pathways. Early in the school year one Year 11 hair and beauty student had already gained an apprenticeship with a hairdresser, and other students had interviews arranged.

28. Another school provided two good examples of students who had previously been very disengaged from school showing successful progression.

One Year 11 girl was expected to gain four GCSEs and was using these plus her alternative provision outcomes to progress to a travel and tourism course at college; her place was already secured when the school was visited. A Year 11 boy from the same school was expected to gain four GCSEs at grade C. He had completed a work experience placement with a plumber in addition to his alternative provision placement and had secured a place at college linked to a plumbing apprenticeship.

29. Liaison between providers, schools and colleges formed an important part of ensuring that progression routes for students were clear from the outset, as illustrated below.

The City & Guilds courses that students studied through their alternative provision were followed as preparation for a college-based course and/or part of an apprenticeship programme. The local college offered progression routes for students who had already followed a Level 1 City & Guilds course in a range of disciplines. The off-site providers demonstrated a good knowledge of local post-16 opportunities.

30. Not all of the schools kept records of the specific courses or areas of employment or training that their students moved on to. This meant that they were not able to see how well the alternative provision courses had led to the next steps for the students. The schools that did keep these detailed records showed a mixed picture. Where the alternative provision was strongly focused on a vocation or trade, there was sometimes a strong link between the focus of the alternative provision and the next steps taken by the student. In one school, for example, four out of six students who had undertaken an engineering-based placement progressed to a Level 2 engineering-based course post-16, of whom one was quickly offered an apprenticeship; two out of four students progressed to Level 2 hair and beauty courses; and two out of three progressed to Level 2 land-based courses. Sometimes, the students progressed to unrelated training or education, but used the accreditation gained during their alternative provision placements to help them to meet the entry requirements for their desired courses.

## Notes

Her Majesty's Inspectors visited 58 secondary schools (including academies) and 168 alternative providers used by these schools between September 2012 and July 2013. The schools were drawn from an initial sample of 146 secondary schools that covered a wide geographical spread and provided a balanced mix of schools judged

outstanding, good and requires improvement for overall effectiveness. Schools from the initial sample were contacted to establish whether any of their students attended off-site provision. Where this was not the case the school was removed from the fieldwork exercise. This selection method replicates the design of Ofsted's 2011 alternative provision survey and while not a longitudinal study, we would not expect any improvements noted in the quality of alternative provision seen to be related to how the schools were selected.

HMI evaluated the way in which the schools commissioned, selected, monitored and evaluated their alternative provision; the outcomes for the students; and the students' own views and perspectives. They selected several providers of alternative provision to visit in order to evaluate the quality of the provision and how well the school and providers communicated to ensure positive outcomes for the students.

## **What is alternative provision?**

Alternative provision has been defined as education outside school, arranged by local authorities or schools. For the purpose of Ofsted's 2011 survey and again for this three-year survey, alternative provision was defined as something in which a young person participates as part of their regular timetable, away from the site of the school or the pupil referral unit and not led by school staff. Schools can use such provision to try to prevent exclusions, or to re-engage students in their education. Pupil referral units are themselves a form of alternative provision, but many students who are on the roll of a pupil referral unit also attend additional forms of alternative provision off site.

Alternative provision is a largely uninspected and unregulated sector. Beyond pupil referral units and other full-time provision, there is no requirement for the majority of alternative providers to register with any official body and no consistent arrangements to evaluate their quality. In some cases, students do not gain accredited qualifications during their placement, so results are often not available as a measure of quality either. Despite this lack of regulation and accountability, some students spend a significant proportion of their week away from their school or unit attending an alternative provision.

Alternative provision can be set up by the public, voluntary, and private sectors. Some local authorities hold a database of provision which they have selected and which they believe to be of suitable quality for their schools and pupil referral units to use. However, this does not exist in all areas.

## **Further information**

*Alternative provision* (100233), Ofsted, 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100233](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100233).

Alternative provision: good practice, Ofsted;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/search/apachesolr\\_search/alternative%20provision%20good%20practice%20](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/search/apachesolr_search/alternative%20provision%20good%20practice%20)

Alternative provision, statutory guidance, Department for Education, 2013;  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision%20](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision%20).

C Taylor, Improving alternative provision, Department for Education, 2012;  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-alternative-provision](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-alternative-provision).

*Going in the right direction? Careers guidance in schools from September 2012*  
 (130114), Ofsted, 2013; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130114](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130114).

## Annex A: Providers visited

### Schools

Abbey College, Ramsey  
 Avon Valley College  
 Barr's Hill School and Community College  
 Bay House School  
 Beechwood School  
 Bishop Douglass School Finchley  
 Bluecoat Academy  
 Castle Community College  
 Challney High School for Boys and Community College  
 Christ's College Finchley  
 Churchill Community College  
 Dawlish Community College  
 Derby Moor Community Sports College  
 Droitwich Spa High School and Sixth Form Centre  
 Erith School  
 Firth Park Community Arts College  
 Heysham High School Sports College  
 Highfields School  
 Hinchingsbrooke School  
 Hodge Hill Sports and Enterprise College  
 John Masefield High School  
 Landau Forte Academy, Amington  
 Little Lever School  
 Long Stratton High School  
 Mount Carmel Roman Catholic High School, Hyndburn  
 Mount St Joseph: Business and Enterprise College  
 North Kesteven School  
 North Leamington School  
 Northfleet School for Girls  
 Ormiston Bushfield Academy  
 Ounsdale High School  
 Preston School Academy  
 Priory School  
 Rodborough Technology College

### Local authority

Cambridgeshire  
 Wiltshire  
 Coventry  
 Hampshire  
 Slough  
 Barnet  
 Nottingham  
 Kent  
 Luton  
 Barnet  
 North Tyneside  
 Devon  
 Derby  
 Worcestershire  
 Bexley  
 Sheffield  
 Lancashire  
 Derbyshire  
 Cambridgeshire  
 Birmingham  
 Herefordshire  
 Staffordshire  
 Bolton  
 Norfolk  
 Lancashire  
 Bolton  
 Lincolnshire  
 Warwickshire  
 Kent  
 Peterborough  
 Staffordshire  
 Somerset  
 East Sussex  
 Surrey

RSA Academy  
Rushey Mead School  
Sedgehill School  
Shenley Academy  
Sir Bernard Lovell School  
South Shields Community School  
St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School  
St Joseph's Catholic College  
The Bankfield School  
The Bulwell Academy  
The Causeway School  
The Gilbert School  
The Hundred of Hoo School  
The Lacon Childe School  
The Lancaster School  
The Trafalgar School at Downton  
Thomas Tallis School  
Tiverton High School  
Trinity Church of England School, Belvedere  
Upper Shirley High School  
Walworth Academy  
Weavers School  
Wood Green School  
Yardleys School

Sandwell  
Leicester  
Lewisham  
Birmingham  
South Gloucestershire  
South Tyneside  
Bristol City of  
Swindon  
Halton  
Nottingham  
East Sussex  
Essex  
Medway  
Shropshire  
Leicester  
Wiltshire  
Greenwich  
Devon  
Bexley  
Southampton  
Southwark  
Northamptonshire  
Oxfordshire  
Birmingham