



Department  
for Education

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Policy paper

# 2010 to 2015 government policy: children outside mainstream education

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This is a copy of a document that stated a policy of the 2010 to 2015 Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government.  
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<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-education-for-pupils-outside-mainstream-school>. Current policies can be found at the GOV.UK [policies list](#).

## Issue

Large numbers of pupils in [alternative provision](#) (AP) do not achieve meaningful qualifications: in the year 2011 to 2012, only 1.3% of pupils in AP achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grade A\* to C, or equivalent, including English and mathematics.

We believe we need to give providers of education outside mainstream schooling more control over their staffing, curriculum and budget to make sure that these children receive the same quality of education as pupils in mainstream schools.

## Actions

To improve AP, we are:

- extending the duty on local authorities to provide full-time education for pupils who are unable to attend mainstream education
- giving all pupil referral units (PRUs) greater control over their own budgets and staffing from April 2013
- encouraging more PRUs to convert to academies
- making sure that free schools and academies replace PRUs as a route for opening new alternative provision
- trialling a new approach where schools choose and fund the alternative provision for their excluded pupils

- extending school powers to use off-site AP so teachers can decide the most appropriate education for their pupils
- introducing initial teacher training in PRUs by:
  - allowing trainee teachers to carry out practical teaching experience at PRUs
  - allowing PRUs to employ trainees on an employment-based teacher training basis
- introducing statutory guidance for local authorities and schools, from January 2013, on the use of AP and the education of pupils unable to attend school because of illness

## Background

On 1 September 2011, Education Secretary Michael Gove asked Charlie Taylor, the government's Expert Adviser on Behaviour at that time, to conduct a review of the AP sector. On 8 March 2012, Mr Taylor published 28 recommendations in ['Improving alternative provision'](#), all of which were accepted.

As a result, we published [statutory guidance](#) for all alternative provision in July 2012. The guidance came into force on 1 January 2013.

In autumn 2011 the Department for Education also announced the start of a 3-year trial to improve the education of children who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from school. Eleven local authorities are taking part in the trial.

Trial schools receive money directly to place their excluded pupils in PRUs or other alternative settings. Under the trial, these schools are responsible for the education of excluded pupils and can also pay for intervention work to help pupils who are at risk of being excluded.



## Who we've consulted

We published a public consultation '[Reform of alternative provision](#)' on 3 April 2012 on the recommendations in Mr Taylor's report on the AP sector. The consultation closed on 15 May 2012 and received 86 responses.

## Impact

At this stage, it is too early to assess the impact of the measures we're taking to improve AP. Further information is set out in the [equality impact assessment on improving alternative provision](#), published in April 2012.



## Bills and legislation

The main laws and regulations relevant to this policy are:

- [section 19 of the Education Act 1996](#), as amended by [the Children, Schools and Families Act 2010](#)
- section 29A of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- sections 6A and 100 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- sections 1C and 4 of the [Academies Act 2010](#) (as amended)
- [The Education \(Pupil Referral Units\) \(Application of Enactments\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)
- [The Pupil Referral Units \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Referral Units\) \(Management Committees etc.\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)



- [The Education \(Educational Provision for Improving Behaviour\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Educational Provision for Improving Behaviour\) Regulations 2012](#)
- [The Education \(Short Stay Schools\) \(Closure\) \(England\) Regulations 2010](#)

## Appendix 1: alternative provision

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

Children and young people educated in alternative provision (AP) are among the most vulnerable. They include pupils who have been excluded or who cannot attend mainstream school for other reasons: for example, children with behaviour issues, those who have short- or long-term illness, school phobics, teenage mothers, pregnant teenagers, or pupils without a school place.

### Pupil referral units (PRUs)

PRUs are one type of AP. They are local authority establishments which provide education for children unable to attend a mainstream school. There were 393 PRUs in operation on 15 February 2013.

All PRUs have a teacher in charge, similar to a mainstream school's headteacher. They also have a management committee, which acts like a mainstream school's governing body. Since April 2013, PRUs have been given greater control over their budgets and staffing. They have similar freedoms to mainstream schools, AP academies and AP free schools.



### AP academies and free schools

AP academies and AP free schools are not maintained by a local authority, but they also provide education for children unable to attend a mainstream school. Like mainstream academies, they have greater freedoms to meet the needs of their pupils.

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