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ALTERNATIVE PROVISION AND OFF-SITE DIRECTION POLICY

Accord
MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

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1.0	October 2024	Director of Education	This policy compliments a range of operational procedures in place ensuring compliance with placements in Alternative Provision and Off-site direction.
2.0	July 2025	Director of Education	Updates aligned with DfE February 2025 updates including further guidance on the use of unregistered alternative provision. Update also includes the explicit reference to the use of risk assessments when commissioning both Off Site Direction and Alternative Provision.
3.0	January 2026	MPA's Assistant Headteacher	Updates to incorporate the opening of MPA's Two-Year-Old Provision

Approvals			
Name	**Position**	**Signature**	**Date**
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CONTENTS

SECTION	TITLE	PAGE NUMBER
1	Introduction	4
2	Purpose and Scope	4
3	Definitions of Off-Site Direction and Alternative Provision	4
4	The Principles of Alternative Provision	4
5	The identification of students for Off-Site Direction or Alternative Provision	5
6	Off-Site Direction without parent/carer consent	6
7	Off-Site Direction Procedures	6
8	Alternative Provision Arrangements	7
9	Application of Alternative Provision for Two-Year-Old Pupils	8
10	Safeguarding considerations	9
11	Funding and resource allocation	10
12	Roles and responsibilities	10
13	Communication and Parental Involvement	10
14	Policy Review	10

1. Introduction

The Accord Multi Academy Trust, is committed to providing a high-quality and inclusive education to all pupils, including those for whom traditional school settings may not be suitable.

This policy outlines the processes and provision for directing pupils to off-site education and the use of Alternative Provision (AP). It ensures that placements commissioned for pupils are safe, effective and contribute to positive educational outcomes. It has been developed in accordance with the statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DFE) including 'Alternative Provision: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities' and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education.'

2. Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to all pupils at our academies who may benefit from Off-Site Direction or Alternative Provision (AP).

It aims to:

- Support pupils who are struggling to engage in a mainstream classroom setting.
- Prevent fixed term suspensions and exclusions by providing bespoke support.
- Promote positive educational, social, and emotional outcomes.
- Ensure that any Off Site or AP placement is safe, appropriate and in line with the pupil's best interests.

3. Definitions of Off-Site Direction and Alternative Provision

Off-Site Direction: Refers to the temporary placement of a pupil at another educational setting to improve their behaviour and/or engagement. This can be used by academy leaders as a short-term strategy for pupils who require intensive support to reintegrate back into the academy.

Alternative Provision (AP): Refers to a tailored educational setting for pupils who cannot access mainstream education due to behaviour, health, mental health, or other identified needs. AP can be delivered on or off-site and is designed to provide academic, vocational, and / or therapeutic support.

4. The Principles of Alternative Provision

Personalisation: Each AP placement will be personalised to meet the individual needs of the pupil.

Quality assurance: Academies will only work with AP providers who meet the Trust's quality and safeguarding standards and those set out by the Department for Education, as shown below:

'*Every provider of education that is not a maintained school or academy must be registered as an 'independent school' if it provides full-time education to:*

- *five or more pupils of compulsory school age, or*
- *one such pupil who is looked-after, or*
- *one such pupil with an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP).*

It is an offence to operate an unregistered independent school. Applications for registration by new schools must be submitted and approved before a school begins to operate and admit pupils.

("Full-time education" is not defined in law, however the DfE states that 'Full-time education' should equate to what the pupil would normally receive in their school. DfE also say they will consider any institution that is operating during the day for more than 18 hours per week to be providing full time education.)

Safeguarding: Pupil safety is placed above all else and all AP providers will undergo regular safeguarding checks and quality assessments.

Reintegration focus: Ultimately, the aim for any pupil entering AP is to return to mainstream education where feasible, or to move onto a suitable post-16 pathway.

5.The identification of pupils for Off-Site Direction or Alternative Provision

Pupils may be directed to either Off Site Direction or Alternative Provision for the following reasons:

- They are at risk of permanent exclusion.
- They are in receipt of fixed term suspensions and are disengaged from mainstream education.
- They are persistently disruptive to both their own education and that of others.
- They are experiencing social, emotional, or mental health needs that are impairing their ability to learn in a mainstream setting.
- Medical or other specific needs that require a different learning environment.
- They would benefit from vocational learning opportunities that are not available in the academy they attend.

Decisions for Off-Site Direction or AP placement will be made by the Principal/Headteacher in conjunction with identified senior leadership team (SLT) colleagues. This decision will be taken in consultation with parents/carers, the pupils, and any relevant external agencies. (for example, Social Services, CAMHS etc.)

6. Off-site Direction without parent/carer consent

Should a parent/carer disagree with Off-Site Direction, academies will endeavour to listen to the parent/carer concerns and work collaboratively with them. That said, parent/carer consent is **not** legally required for a school/academy to direct a pupil off-site under this provision, and in exceptional circumstances the academy Principal/Headteacher may choose to exercise this statutory right.

7. Off-Site Direction Procedures

- **Initial assessment and referral:**

- The Principal/Headteacher or designated member of SLT will conduct an assessment to determine the need for Off-site direction.

- **Consultation:**

- Parents/carers will be invited to a meeting to discuss the proposal for Off-Site direction, its intended impact and expected outcomes.
- Pupil voice will be taken into consideration when determining the Off-Site direction.
- Written consent will be sought where required.

- **Agreement and planning:**

1. A personalised plan will be developed, setting out the objectives of the Off-site direction alongside the duration of the provision.
2. As part of this process a risk assessment will be completed to ensure any known risks are shared and mitigated.
3. Plans will include consideration of the taught curriculum and the access to any required support for the student.
4. Review dates will be agreed.

- **Monitoring and reviewing**

- Academy leaders will maintain a close contact with the off-site provision to monitor attendance, progress, and student wellbeing.
- Review meetings will be held regularly or in the case of an emergency as quickly as possible.
- These meetings will include a review of any known risks and the mitigations being taken to address these.

- **Reintegration:**

- A reintegration plan will be developed to support the pupil's return to mainstream education, if appropriate.

8. Alternative Provision Arrangements

- **Referral Process and application**

- A referral will be made by an academy leader in consultation with the Principal/Headteacher and parents/carers.
- Whilst Ofsted registered provision is the preferred option of the Trust, appropriate use of unregistered provision can also be considered.
- Commissioners (Academy Leaders) should ensure that they do not place children with an unregistered provider if that would mean that the setting would need to be registered as an independent school.
- An initial needs assessment will be carried out to determine the most appropriate AP.
- The academy will oversee the application to AP working with parents/carers to aid their understanding of the process.
- This process will include a risk assessment that identifies any known risks and mitigations that can be taken.

- **Quality Assurance**

- The academy will only use AP providers who meet their approved standards. This includes comprehensive safeguarding checks and those providers who have a proven track record of success.
- Academy leaders should pay close attention to the quality assurance of any unregistered provision and ensure that it is not operating illegally and should be registered as an independent school. A definition of which can be found below:

'Education providers offering full-time education for five or more children of compulsory school age or at least one child with an EHC plan or who is looked-after by the local authority are required to be registered as independent schools and meet the Independent School Standards.' (*Arranging Alternative Provision A guide for Local Authorities and Schools February 2025)*

- Regular visits and quality assurance checks will be carried out by a nominated leader within the academies to ensure the provision is safe and is meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs of the student.

- **Monitoring and reviewing provision**

  - The academy will maintain regular contact with the AP provider. They will receive regular updates on the pupil's attendance, progress, behaviour, and engagement.
  - Designated staff members will conduct regular visits to the AP setting to ensure the provision remains safe and suitable for the pupil.

- **Reviewing the provision and next steps**

- A pupil's progress at the AP setting will be subject to regular review. Parents/carers and the pupil will be involved in this process.
- Where possible, decisions will be made in conjunction with parents/cares and pupils on whether to continue the AP, change the provision or plan for a reintegration into mainstream education.

9. Application of Alternative Provision for Two-Year-Old Pupils (At Middlestown Primary Academy)

The processes for Off-Site Direction and Alternative Provision (AP), as detailed in sections 1 through 8 of this policy, are primarily designed for pupils of compulsory school age who are struggling to engage with the mainstream curriculum, often presenting with complex behavioural challenges or significant risk of exclusion.

Due to the unique developmental stage and non-statutory nature of education for two-year-olds (who are below compulsory school age), the formal mechanisms of Off-Site Direction and AP as described in this document are typically not applicable in the same manner as they are for older pupils.

Our approach for this age group focuses instead on early intervention, multi-agency collaboration, and bespoke in-academy support within the existing Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework.

Key Principles for Two-Year-Old Provision:

- **Early Intervention:** Identification of needs for two-year-olds focuses on developmental delays, emerging Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), or significant welfare concerns, rather than 'disruptive behaviour' in the context of mainstream disengagement.

- **Collaboration with Parents/Carers:** Engagement with parents/carers of two-year-olds is paramount. Decisions regarding highly tailored support or referral to external agencies are always made in close collaboration with families, ensuring full consent and partnership working.

- **Multi-Agency Support over AP:** If a two-year-old is unable to access our setting effectively due to complex needs (e.g., severe social, emotional, or health needs), the academy coordinates support through appropriate local authority early years teams, health visitors, paediatricians, Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT), or social services. The focus is on securing appropriate therapeutic or specialist intervention, which may involve signposting parents to more suitable specialist nursery placements within the local authority provision, rather than directing the child to a third-party 'Alternative Provision' provider.

- **Safeguarding and Welfare First:** Any concerns that may typically lead to considerations of AP in older pupils (such as significant social-emotional needs or home challenges) are handled robustly via our established safeguarding and early help procedures, ensuring the child's welfare is prioritized.

Summary:

While this overarching policy applies to all pupils on roll, formal direction to AP is inappropriate for the two-year-old cohort. The academy addresses the needs of its youngest learners through tailored EYFS provision, early intervention strategies, and strong links with specialist local authority services to ensure every child receives appropriate, high-quality, and inclusive education and care.

10. Safeguarding considerations

- The academy will ensure that all AP placements comply with Trust safeguarding and child protection policies.
- All providers will be required to provide evidence of safeguarding policies, staff DBS checks alongside details of their designated safeguarding lead.
- Where required, risk assessments will be undertaken in conjunction with the pupil, their parents, and the provider.
- Regular safeguarding and monitoring visits will be conducted by a member of the academy's safeguarding team.

11. Funding and resource allocation

- Funding for off-site Direction or AP will be allocated from the academy's budget as appropriate.
- All placements will be costed and approved by the Principal/Headteacher in line with the Trust's financial regulations.

12. Roles and responsibilities

- **Principal/Headteacher:** Holds overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and all off-site/AP arrangements.
- **Identified SLT colleagues:** Oversee the identification, referral, and review processes.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead:** Ensures that safeguarding procedures are followed, and AP placements are safe.
- **Governors and Trustees:** Monitor the effectiveness of off-site direction and AP through the Academy Education Committee (AEC) reporting cycle and link visits to the academy.

13. Communication and Parental Involvement

Parents/carers will be involved in the decision-making process and academy communications will be clear, transparent, and supportive recognising the need for a collaborative approach.

14. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Trust and associated senior leaders to ensure it remains compliant and reflective of best practice. Amendments to the policy will be approved by the Board of Trustees.