

Alternative Provision

When a child is unable to access mainstream education, education outside of school will be arranged. This education is called alternative provision. Alternative Provisions provides access to a curriculum with a high emphasis on play-based learning.

There is a range of reasons why children may be offered alternative provision. Some of the reasons why children may be offered alternative provision are as follows:

- They are at risk of permanent exclusion in school
- They have already been permanently excluded from school
- They have already been out of education for a prolonged period of time and, therefore, require additional support and intensive teaching to ensure that they can get access to an appropriate education
- They are extremely anxious and/or vulnerable. This includes children who suffer from mental health issues, such as severe anxiety and depression
- They are refusing to attend school
- They have Special Educational Needs

Alternative provision should focus on the child's needs and interests in a nurturing way that can help them build up their trust and confidence again. Alternative provision may include: therapeutic learning, forest schools, outdoor learning, sports facilities, farming, animal assisted therapeutic centres and hospital schools.

It is recommended that before starting Alternative Provision, a risk assessment is carried out by schools to identify and minimise any risks that are identified from delivering Alternative Provision. Schools should also consider (where appropriate):

- Being familiar with the site
- Undertake planning and preparation
- Review activities and advise where adjustments maybe necessary
- Ensure appropriate ratio of adults: children
- Ensure that adults have details and/or are well informed of children's medical or special educational needs
- Check that parents have given consent
- Check that mobile phones and/or walkie talkies are charged and working
- Completing an environmental audit to check on existing practices, assessing the environmental effects of current activities

What are activities that can support children receiving alternative provision?

Sensory-Based Learning:

Messy play is an activity where you can really focus on the process. It's a great way for the child to learn more about things by experiencing them. Messy play can be presented in a number of ways, such as on sensory trays, each with a different theme e.g., The Hungry Caterpillar. Remember to use edible, clean materials, and be mindful of choking hazards and allergies.



Outdoor Learning

Outdoor Learning aims to support personal and social development through learning in the outdoors and providing a positive learning experience. Activities could include:



- Forest Schools: den building, studying wildlife, tracking games, arts and sculpture, tool use, woodland and traditional craft, developing stories and drama, and meeting imaginary characters, physical movement, splashing in puddles, mini beast hunt, catching rain, music instruments.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development Ideas:

- Try low-level experiences for young children, like using old tyres as a sturdy base for investigations – they could be a holder for a washing up bowl for water play or a planter for herbs to investigate with their key person.
- Wind chimes and windsocks, old CDs, and other objects suspended from a tree branch make interesting things for young children to watch and adults to key into cues.
- Parachute games can help form good relationships as children play with others.
- Construction with crates, planks, large blocks are great for physical development and problem-solving.



Communication & Language Development Ideas:



- Provide small reading nooks for children to explore books independently or for story times in small groups.
- Songs and rhymes work just as well inside as outside – try them out in your new environment.
- Make print available outdoors – laminated words reflecting children's home languages or perhaps a 'recipe sheet' or 'menu' for your mud kitchen!
- Listen to the sounds – birds, bees, aeroplanes, cars, and emergency service sirens- and talk about what is making them. Conversations about the weather are a fantastic opportunity to extend language, talking about the wind 'blowing', 'swishing' and so on.
- Make puppets and use them, thinking about how you will provide role play outside like a garden centre or car wash, for

example.

- Sometimes providing a narrative can help support learning, talking about what children are doing "jumping up and down" or "splish splash" (as they jump in puddles).

Physical Development Ideas:

- Consider how children can safely explore outdoors. For example, how to facilitate climbing
- Make instruments or have 'Wake up shake up' sessions to further explore movement, giving children free rein to move and dance. Dance with ribbons and scarves to encourage gross motor skills, crossing the midline and bi-lateral movements.
- Provide resources for the children to help build an assault course or sensory circuit outside.
- Sweeping brushes and other tools can help develop more physical skills. Large scale mark-making can be done with chalks or water and large brushes on the floor or a large piece of paper.
- Consider nooks and shaded areas for play and rest too.



Literacy Development Ideas:



- Share your favourite books and stories in a new environment.
- Watch the clouds, talking about the various shapes you can see (like a dragon or The Gruffalo). Add to the children's word bank by talking through the different types of clouds and their shapes.
- Make your own stories – try a 'magic carpet' where each child adds something to the story, and you recap as you go. For example, they can choose characters, where they are going, what adventures they will have and so on.

This can be done with a large piece of paper too so that the children can draw, practise their emergent writing and you can scribe to capture their thoughts.

- Try sound or sensory walks as you explore your outside space.
- First-hand experiences of the weather, seasons and world are in abundance outdoors. Factual books might extend this too!
- Children could write for a purpose, checking on mini beats during a hunt

Mathematics Development Ideas:

- Try out the same songs and rhymes that cover important mathematical ideas from indoors.
- Provide items in a range of sizes, weights and textures. Talk about the size of things such as a "big book" or "small book". You can try providing treasure basket and heuristic play outdoors on a dry day too.
- Collect natural treasures to count (pinecones, leaves, shells, and rocks), sort into sizes, even or uneven groups, divide to share them with a friend, categorise, sequence – the list is endless!
- Large dice can be rolled to explore numbers, add spots from two dice, decide which is the largest or smallest number (or perhaps they are "the same"?)
- Explore volume and capacity – try making a weighing scale using a coat hanger and small buckets – and then provide objects and resources to weigh so children can hypothesise how many lighter objects it will take to weigh the same as a heavier object? Explore how many small cups of water might it take to fill a bucket or other experiments with volumes.
- Use large 2D shapes on the floor, and let children interact with them – can children jump from a triangle to the square, for example?



Understanding the World Development Ideas:



- Laminate photos of children and their families to have in the outdoor space.
- It might be possible for small groups to go for walks in the local community, perhaps to fruit pick or learn more about the local shops, places of worship, road signs and other environmental print. You can take photos of the different types of print you see to make a display or photo book.
- Explore the seasons by planting seeds, growing food

in planters or grow bags, and talk children through life cycles and other important natural processes.

- Provide windmills and bubbles and see how they interact with the changing world outside.
- Bug hunts or treasure hunts are a great idea – How many natural objects can they find to fit into a small box? Can they find something starting with 'sssss'?
- Discuss your shadow – Why does your shadow look small sometimes and longer at others? Is your shadow in front or behind you? Draw around your shadow at different times of the day and see if the children can track the time.

Expressive Arts and Design Development Ideas:

- Create story boxes and story sacks to spark creativity.
- Create bird boxes, bird feeders, bug hotels out of boxes, yoghurt pots, milk bottles etc.
- Create a stage (this could be a chalked or taped off area or made from decking or crates) for children to recreate stories, make up plays or puppet and dance shows.
- Provide an arts area for children to explore various media – the outdoors brings a hue of natural colours for extra inspiration.
- Provide clipboards and pencils to inspire children to write and draw plans (Maybe they want to use them in the construction area, or you might be planning to create a Bingham Place or Nectar Café)?



Useful Links:

[Gov.uk – Alternative provision](#)

[Sense – Resources for education and early years professionals](#)

[Twinkl – School activities challenge cards](#)

[Forest School Association](#)



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