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Halton Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-2028



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NHS
Cheshire and Merseyside



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1. Introduction

Halton's Alternative Provision Strategy has been developed, following consultation, to deliver statutory requirements, address local priorities and consider local need. Children, families, providers, and stakeholders contributed to the development of this Strategy which included 1:1 interviews, focus group reflections, virtual events, webinars and culminated in a Professionals Event with Headteachers, SENCOs, Health, Social Care and Youth Justice partners.

Building a sense of belonging for children and young people should be central to the work of all services and professionals in Halton, whether it is within a family, classroom, school or friendship group. Widespread research has proven that a feeling of belonging shapes a child's sense of self-worth and happiness. It also shapes how they make relationships with other people in their lives. When children and young people have a sense of belonging, they know their family, friends, school, and community accept, value, care, and support them. They have a secure foundation to learn and grow and as such achieve significant better outcomes in education and life.

However, for some children and young people, the journey through education is not always straightforward, but we are determined that every child and young person in Halton should receive the support they need to thrive - educationally, emotionally, and socially - regardless of their starting point.

The Government definition of Alternative Provision is as follows:

- Education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education.
- Education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period suspension.
- Pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour.

Alternative Provision may be an option for pupils who are:

- At risk of being permanently excluded.
- Permanently excluded and in need of a placement until their new school begins.
- In need of targeted and specific support and early intervention.
- Struggling to have their needs met in their current setting.

Alternative Provision provides these pupils with another temporary education setting that suits their current needs, with:

- Early and short-term intervention to support them in their school (or in placements between schools and AP).
- Education in the local community.
- Pupil-centred interventions to help pupils engage in an appropriate curriculum that includes core subjects.
- Flexible support, according to need and which considers the child's family context.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop positive relationships, build resilience and emotional wellbeing.
- A range of approaches, strategies, and skills to enable pupils to reintegrate back into mainstream school as soon as possible.

Within Halton, the types of Alternative Provision are:



Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).



Resource bases.



Out of borough provision in independent non maintained special schools.



Ofsted Registered and unregistered providers available to the local authority and schools

Alternative Provision should only be accessed when all other forms of inclusive mainstream education have been implemented and evaluated. Our Alternative Provision Strategy 2025–2028 sets out Halton’s ambition to ensure all children and young people can access high-quality, timely and appropriate education in a setting that best meets their individual needs. In formulating this Strategy, we are taking purposeful steps to transform Halton’s approach to Alternative Provision, ensuring more coordinated and sustainable solutions.

This Strategy adheres to DfE statutory guidance regarding Alternative Provision, safeguarding practices, behaviour and additional needs. It is informed by the principles of the Halton Children and Young People’s Partnership Plan (CYPP) 2024–2027, which commits to ensuring that every child and young person in Halton:

- is safe and supported;
- is ready to learn and achieve;
- has good emotional wellbeing;
- feels they belong and are valued.

It also works in partnership to deliver key priorities of Halton’s SEND Strategy and SEND Sufficiency Strategy and supports Halton’s Local Inclusion Plan. It is underpinned by an approach which promotes early identification, inclusive practice, and strong multi-agency collaboration.

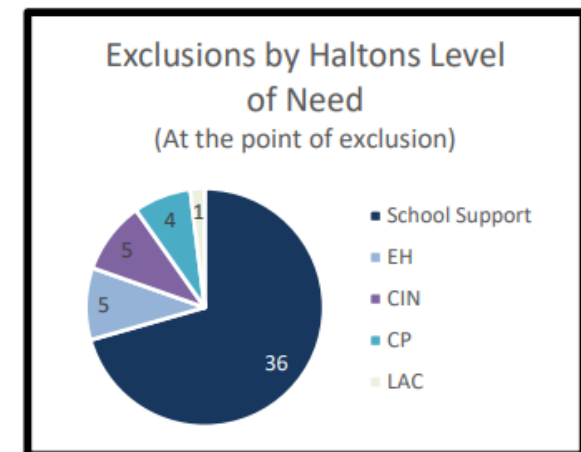
2. Local Context

There are a range of factors that impact on the need for Alternative Provision within the borough and these include, but are not restricted to:

- A lack of clarity of the Alternative Provision availability and quality, both within and outside of the borough
- Rising levels of school-based anxiety and emotional needs
- Over-reliance on placements that are long-term and high cost
- Inconsistent pathways for reintegration or progression
- Variation in access and quality of outreach support across the borough

Exclusions in Halton in 2024/2025 have reduced since the previous year, which is an acknowledged positive improvement. However, exclusions in secondary schools remain noticeably high. Exclusions of male students exceed females (29 v 21), however the rate of female exclusions, which sit across the secondary phase, is concerning. In addition, the number of vulnerable pupils excluded totals 51, this is 84% of the 2024/2025 total exclusions. Within this excluded group 80% have a level of special education needs. Consideration to and reflection of inclusive practices in our education provision need to be considered by school leaders and the Council alike.

Exclusions 2024/2025					
Managed Exclusions 2024/2025	Primary 2025/26		Secondary 2025/26		Post 16 2025/26
51	6		44		1
Exclusions 2023/2024 Comparison	KS1	KS2	KS3	KS4	KS5
61	0	6	21	22	1
Halton Schools	0	6	19	21	1
Other LA Schools	0	0	1	1	0
Halton pupils referred to other LA's	0	0	1	1	0
Overturned Exclusions	0	0	1	0	0



Exclusions by Year Group and Gender																													
R		1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		11		12		13		14	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	3	0	5	5	2	6	8	8	5	2	0	0	0	0	1	0

When considering the reasons for exclusions it is positive to note the significant reduction in the number of pupils excluded due to persistent disruptive behaviour. This supports the impact of a range of targeted work that has occurred in Halton schools including but not restricted to Shine Therapy training, introduction of the Thrive Approach, Team Teach Training, Team Around the School (TAS) meetings and school to school cluster support.

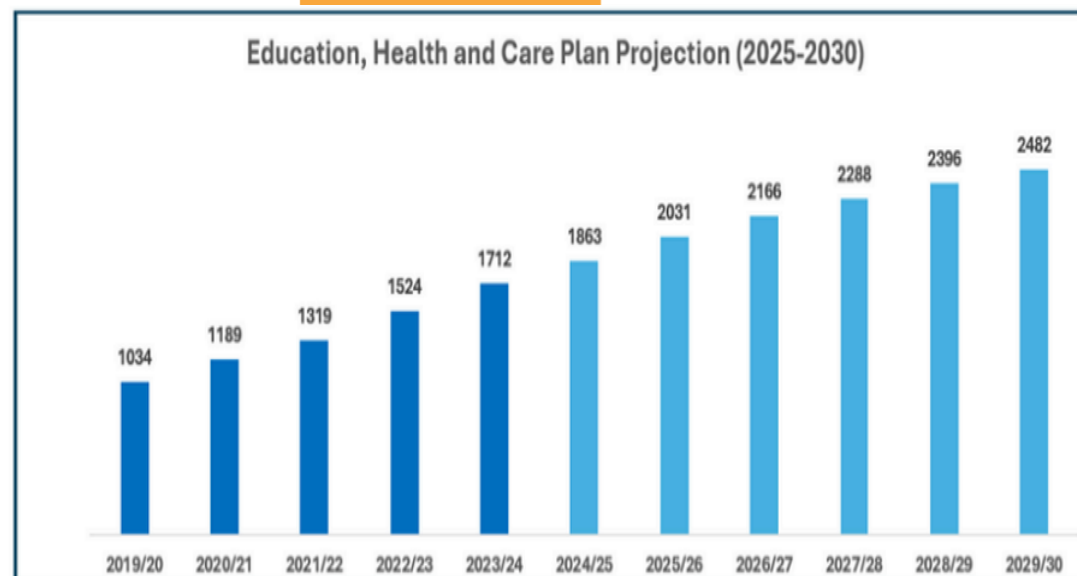
The increase in drug and alcohol related exclusions is a significant increase. The context of this is that this represents one specific incident, involving a number of pupils. As a result, there was a rapid multi-agency response, endorsed by Halton's Safeguarding Partnership Board, of support and training which occurred to support pupils and professionals. The figure is expected to drop in 2025/2026.

Reasons for Exclusions	24/25	23/24	22/23	21/22	20/21
Damage	0	0	0	1	0
Drug and alcohol related	17	3	2	2	2
Inappropriate use of social media or online technology	0	0	0	1	0
Persistent disruptive behaviour	11	25	33	16	4
Physical assault on adult	9	19	5	2	4
Physical assault on pupil	7	5	7	6	3
Racist abuse	1	0	0	0	0
Sexual misconduct	1	1	0	0	0
Theft	0	0	0		0
Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour to adult	1	5	2	3	2
Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour to pupil	0	0	3	1	0
Wilful and repeated transgression of protective measures in place to protect public health	2	3	0	0	0
Use of threat of use of an offensive weapon or prohibited item	1	0	0	0	0

The ongoing challenges faced by the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEN) system are well documented and being experienced locally, regionally and nationally. Levels of demand, financial pressures, staff retention and sufficiency of suitable placements are all contributing to a need for change and reform.

In Halton, the most recent placement published data (January 2025) shows that placement of children n with EHC Plans in secondary schools at 13.9%; special schools at 15.3% and higher in primary schools at 28.5% largely driven by the high number of pupils in resource provisions which stood at 227 in January 2025. Although the percentages of out of borough (OOB) special school are relatively low, the financial implication of educating the 136 CYPs in out of borough special schools is high as the Local Authority is currently spending around £8.9 million annually to fund placement into NMISS. Forecasted figures for the predicted increase in children requiring an EHC Plan in the next five years show that the demand for specialist provision is only going to rise.

Placement Type	EHC Pupils	% of total EHC Pupils (1712)
Mainstream EY	66	3.9
Special EY	0	0.0
Mainstream Primary	488	28.5
Special Halton Primary	176	10.3
Special OOB Primary	27	1.6
Mainstream Secondary	238	13.9
Special Halton Secondary	262	15.3
Special OOB Secondary	91	5.3
Mainstream 16-19	122	7.1
Special Post 16-19	51	3.0
Special OOB Post 16-19	17	1.0
Mainstream 20-25	43	2.5
Special Halton 20-25	8	0.5
Special OOB 20-25	3	0.2
Pupil Referral Unit	14	0.8
Others	106	6.2
Total	1712	100.0



NOTE: OOB refers to placement in NMISS, most of which are out of Halton Borough Council. Others refers to children and young people who are Electively Home Educated (EHE), Educated Other Than At School (EOTAS), Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and/or those attending Alternative Provision (AP).

3. A Shared Commitment

This Strategy is a commitment to Halton's children and young people. It is also a call to action for all schools, services, and providers across the borough.

Only through shared ownership, early support, and high-quality provision can we ensure that no child or young person is left without access to a meaningful education.

Together, we will build a system of Alternative Provision that is inclusive, responsive and ambitious - so that every child and young person in Halton can achieve their full potential

Our vision is clear:

Children and young people in Halton will have access to the right support, in the right place, at the right time - so they can thrive in learning and life.

This Strategy sets out how Halton will develop and commission a dynamic and responsive system of Alternative Provision, rooted in prevention, partnership and quality.

It aims to:

- ✓ Strengthen inclusive practice in mainstream settings.
- ✓ Reduce the need for permanent exclusions.
- ✓ Improve educational and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people accessing Alternative Provision.
- ✓ Ensure sufficiency, sustainability, and value-for-money in Alternative Provision commissioning.
- ✓ Support confident and timely transitions back to school or on to post-16 pathways.

The Strategy applies to all children and young people in Halton who may require Alternative Provision, including those who:

- are at risk of exclusion;
- are experiencing school-based anxiety or disengagement;
- are unable to attend school due to health or emotional need;
- are new to the area and awaiting school placement;
- require a time-limited intervention to support re-engagement in education;
- are placed in Alternative Provision as named on an individual's Education, Health and Care Plan.



5. Our Strategic Priorities 2025–2028

To deliver our vision we will work collaboratively with all stakeholders and organisations across Halton and the Liverpool City Region, and listen to the voice of children, young people and families. We will deliver improvement by focusing on achieving better outcomes for all and will:

Priority 1 – Strengthen Early Identification and Prevention

We will develop systems and partnerships that allow earlier identification of emerging needs, particularly for children and young people at risk of exclusion or disengagement. We will:

- ✚ Support schools to embed early intervention pathways.
- ✚ Improve use of data and shared intelligence.
- ✚ Strengthen access to behaviour, mental health, and inclusion support within mainstream setting.

Priority 2 – Promote Inclusion and Improve Mainstream Capacity

We want more children and young people to succeed in their local mainstream school. We will:

- ✚ Strengthen access to behaviour, mental health, and inclusion support within mainstream setting to learners at risk of exclusion through sharing good practice and school to school partnerships.
- ✚ Promote and ensure ordinarily available inclusive provision.
- ✚ Embed inclusive, trauma-informed practice in all schools.
- ✚ Support access to graduated SEND support and work with schools to reduce the disproportionate exclusion and suspension of children with SEND.
- ✚ Intensify effective collaboration between Early Help and schools specifically targeted at children at risk of exclusion through the team around the school approach.

Priority 3 – Ensure Access to High-Quality, Purposeful Alternative Provision

Where Alternative Provision is needed, it must be timely, tailored and of high quality. We will:

- ✚ Improve commissioning processes and define a quality framework for Alternative Provision.
- ✚ Develop a diverse and flexible Alternative Provision offer across the borough.
- ✚ Ensure a multi-agency decision making process to ensure joint decision making on effective placement.
- ✚ Quality assure all aspects of provision.
- ✚ Strengthen the appropriate use of Alternative Provision that can deliver targets for children with Education, Health and Care Plans.

Priority 4 – Support Effective Transitions and Progression

Alternative Provision must support children and young people to achieve positive destinations. We will:

-  Promote strong reintegration pathways and processes back into mainstream provision, in line with the DfE Arranging Alternative Provision guidance.
-  Where providers are unregistered, the local authority will use the non-school Alternative Provision voluntary standards to support effective provision for young people.
-  Improve post-16 transitions through coordinated planning and early support.
-  Work with partners in education, training, and employment to widen options.

Priority 5 – Strengthen Systems, Governance, and Partnership

We will ensure there is a clear understanding of responsibilities that sit with schools and their Governing Bodies, and which are the remit of the Local Authority. We will:

-  Establish clear local governance.
-  Co-produce a strategic action plan that is suitable to need, capacity, funding access and environment.
-  Use data and feedback to evaluate and improve provision Embed co-production with children, young people, families and providers.

6. Halton's approach to Alternative Provision: our roadmap 2025-2028

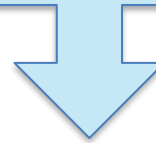
Consideration of effective, successful and sufficient Alternative Provision is part of a broader plan for Halton Borough Council, which will consider what is available and where. As such, this Strategy will be delivered through a three-year implementation plan (2025–2028), which will set out:

- ❖ annual objectives and milestones;
- ❖ named leads and partner responsibilities;
- ❖ measurable outcomes and performance indicators.

Three-year Implementation Plan

Year 1 2025/26

- Utilisation of, and access to, a framework of approved providers which schools and academies can commission to support a child or young person's educational success
- New PRU leadership and a revised offer of support to schools and academies
- Opportunity for Halton secondary schools and academies to express an interest in establishing provisions to support young people at risk of exclusion and disconnection
- Support sector led support and facilitate school to school support
- Promotion of the DfE's Offsite direction to build reciprocal arrangements between schools
[School suspensions and permanent exclusions GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/school-suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions)



Year 2 2026/27

- Implementation of KS3 provision in selected secondary schools - expansion of provision
- Quality Assurance of approved providers for wider commissioning consideration
- Expansion of the approved alternative providers list. Review and support the development of the Regional Framework



Year 3 2027/28

- Launch of two appropriate PRU/Alternative Provision centres in Halton to deepen the offer to children and young people at risk and to expand the offer of expert development in professional practice

7. What success will look like across Halton

It is intended that the success of this Strategy will be wide reaching and meet the priorities of Halton's Children and Young People's Partnership Plan and will contribute to:

Increasing the numbers of children and young people whose needs will be met within their original mainstream educational

Reducing the time children and young people spend in Alternative Provision

Improved transitions back into mainstream settings

Reducing the number of exclusions and suspensions in mainstream settings

Improving attendance across all educational settings

Improving outcomes for children and young people, supporting all key points of transition towards, and including, post-16

Increasing the number of young people accessing Post 16 education, employment or training

Ensuring stakeholder feedback, across all groups, informs us of the impact of improvement

However, all partners will be key in the successful adoption and delivery of this Strategy to ensure it achieves the intended impact. This includes the Council, health partners, schools and voluntary and community sectors. We need everyone to understand how they can play a role in delivering these priorities.

Our governance process will be the method to assure ourselves we are making progress. Appropriate and relevant governance structures are to be developed and identified as part of the Strategy implementation. This will be supported by information gathered from the accompanying implementation plan as well as performance indicators gathered from population data, insights on experiences and outcome data. We will also welcome acknowledgment, challenge and support from external agencies such as Ofsted and the DfE. We will produce an annual delivery plan identifying clear and aspirational yet achievable outcomes, measures and timeframes. We will produce an annual delivery plan identifying clear and aspirational yet achievable outcomes, measures and timeframes. The Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-2028 will be reviewed annually up to 2028.

Appendix 1 – Statutory Publications

Publication Title	Purpose	Document Link
Arranging Alternative Provision	Statutory guidance for local authorities, as well as headteachers and governing bodies of settings providing Alternative Provision	Arranging Alternative Provision - guide for LAs and schools
Non-School Alternative Provision	Non-statutory guidance for unregistered providers that local authorities can use to support effective, safe practice from providers until pending legislation is introduced.	Non-school Alternative Provision: voluntary national standards
Behaviour In Schools: advice for headteachers and schools	How school staff can develop a behaviour policy including offsite direction	Behaviour in Schools - Advice for headteachers and school staff Feb 2024
Further Guidance and resources for supporting behaviour in schools	Lists resource support to assist schools in considering: • Behaviour guidance and resources • Wellbeing, mental health and bullying • SEND • Case studies	Further guidance and resources for supporting behaviour in schools - GOV.UK
Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school	explains what local authorities and others need to do to ensure that children who are too ill to attend school get a good education.	Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school - GOV.UK
High Needs Funding Operational Guidance	Information for local authorities, schools and colleges about high needs funding arrangements	High needs funding - GOV.UK
Keeping Children Safe in Education	Statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment.	Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK
Working Together to Safeguard Children	Statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help, support and protect children.	Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance
Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement	Statutory guidance on pupil suspensions and exclusions from educational settings including pupil referral units	School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK

Appendix 2 – Halton's Ordinarily Available Inclusive Toolkit – Inclusion by Design

Please find the link to this here [Halton's Ordinarily Available Inclusive Toolkit – Inclusion by Design](#)

Appendix 3 – Team Around the School Referral Form

Please find the link to this here [Behaviour Support in Halton](#)