



# Integrated

Alternative Provision Quality Metrics:  
establishing a baseline for good practice.

2023

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# Executive Summary



This report delves into the landscape of Alternative Provision (AP), shedding light on the diverse strategies utilised by providers to evaluate pupil progress, facilitate successful transitions, and assess programme quality. The findings underscore a commitment to holistic pupil development, incorporating academic progress, emotional well-being, and post-16 destinations.

This report begins by establishing the AP landscape by outlining the latest data from the Department for Education (DfE). Survey results are then relayed, including descriptions of the 62 participating AP providers and descriptions of their placement settings.

This report depicts perceptions of the DfE's three tier model, as outlined in the recent SEND and AP improvement plan, and details on quality metrics for attendance, outreach and support, attainment, reintegration into the mainstream, and post-16 destinations. Our findings suggest a majority (79 per cent) of providers are familiar with the DfE's three-tier model and 44 per cent strongly agree that this is an appropriate model for their provision.

We outline the wide range of methods employed by APs to gauge pupil progress – as uncovered in the survey. Literacy assessments, classroom evaluations, and engagement monitoring showcase a comprehensive approach to understanding pupil growth. Tracking post-16 destinations is a priority, with surveys, job placement assessments and university enrolment tracking providing insights into pupils' chosen paths.

Effective communication with mainstream schools is pivotal. Progress reports, meetings and phone calls facilitate smooth transitions for referred pupils. To improve AP quality, we recommended identifying gaps in current metrics and designing a comprehensive evaluation framework adaptable to different contexts.

Overall, our report showcases the variety of methods providers use to assess quality. The next step in this ongoing work is to assess how providers use quality metrics to inform provision. The report findings are to help providers, policymakers, and parents better understand the breadth of quality measurements across the sector.

# Introduction

In May 2020, as part of the IntegratED project, the Centre for Social Justice published 'Warming the Cold Spots of Alternative Provision: A manifesto for system improvement'.<sup>1</sup> This report unveiled a paucity of government data judging the success of AP, and an absence of standardised measures for academic attainment and 'progress in social and emotional aspects of child development'.<sup>2</sup> The report recommended the development of a more comprehensive framework for the evaluation of quality in AP. In response to this recommendation, the IntegratED Alternative Provision Quality Toolkit was created.<sup>3</sup>

In a parallel project for IntegratED, FFT Education Datalab began to develop a series of performance measures for AP schools.<sup>4</sup> These were designed alongside the AP Quality Toolkit, covering measures related to attainment, qualifications entered, attendance, post-16 destinations and re-integration. In addition, methods of comparing the performance of AP schools with similar intakes were proposed, including contextualisation, and defining similar schools. Some initial consultation about the work began with the AP sector, but further development ceased due to an absence of data during the pandemic as pupils remained home from school.

In November 2022, the CSJ held a series of working groups to discuss the toolkit's reception as well as the metrics used to measure quality AP. By gathering representatives from 32 different state-maintained AP providers, these discussions surfaced concerns about national and local AP quality assurance. Therefore, this report is part of a new investigation on AP quality metrics.

This project includes the results of a survey sent to AP providers to assess quality metrics related to pupil outcomes, partnership working with mainstream schools, attendance, and measures to support pupils. The survey was designed to collect quantitative data that will inform the development of best practice among AP providers as well as policy decisions related to AP. By addressing these objectives, the survey contributes to the establishment of a baseline for good practice in AP, facilitating the improvement of educational outcomes for pupils in AP settings.

1 Centre for Social Justice, [Warming the Cold Spots of Alternative Provision: A manifesto for system improvement](#), May 2020.

2 Ibid.

3 IntegratED, [Alternative Provision Quality Toolkit](#), 2022.

4 FFT Education Datalab, [performance measures for AP schools](#), September 2021.

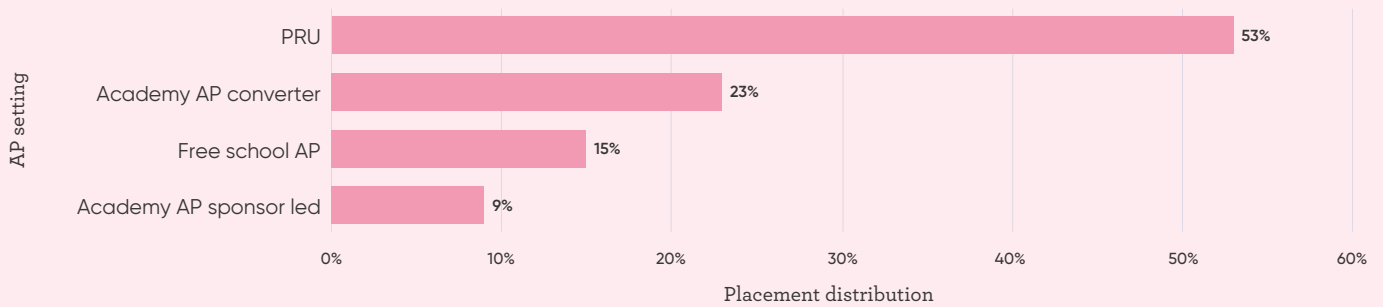
# The statistics: characteristics of pupils in alternative provision

According to the DfE, the number of pupils in state-funded AP schools has surged by 13 per cent from last year, reaching 13,191.<sup>5</sup> These pupils are single registered within a state-maintained AP school. Despite this increase, the current enrolment level remains lower than before the pandemic.

Among these pupils, 70.6 per cent are male, consistent with previous years. More than half of the pupils in state-funded AP schools (57.8 per cent) qualify for free school meals. This is in stark contrast to the broader school population, where the proportion stands at 23.8 per cent.<sup>6</sup>

This year's data reveals that, of the 335 state-maintained AP settings in England, PRUs represent over half of AP placement settings (53 per cent).

## Representations of State-Maintained AP



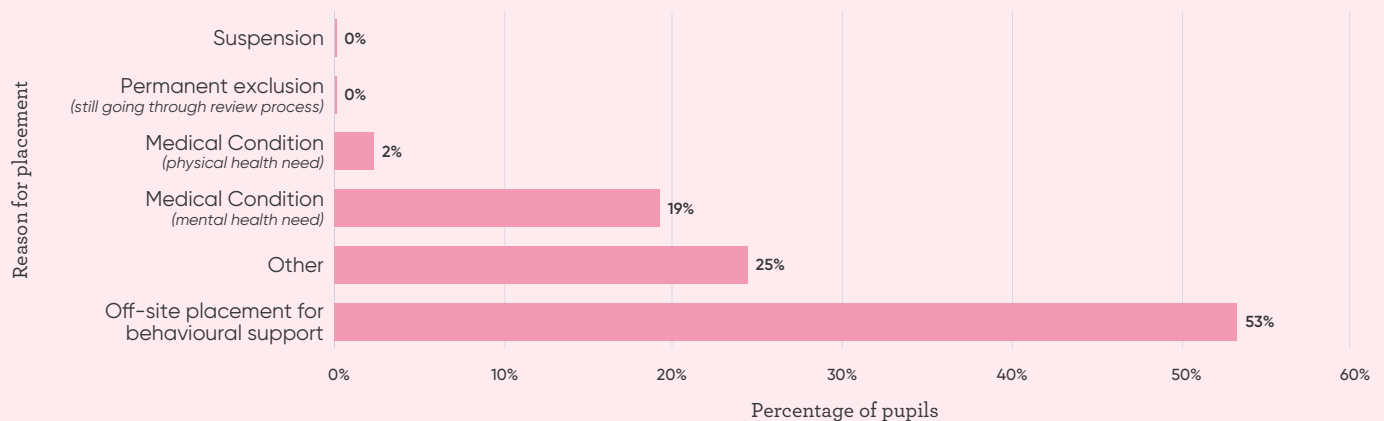
Source: [Department for Education](#).

The leading reason for referral to AP was to receive behavioural support, constituting a significant 55.8 per cent of all recorded placements. Not all pupils are single registered – some pupils are registered on a subsidiary basis. The below graph represents all school arranged placements into registered AP settings with a URN..

5 Department for Education, [Schools, pupils and their characteristics](#), June 2023.

6 Ibid.

## Placement Reason

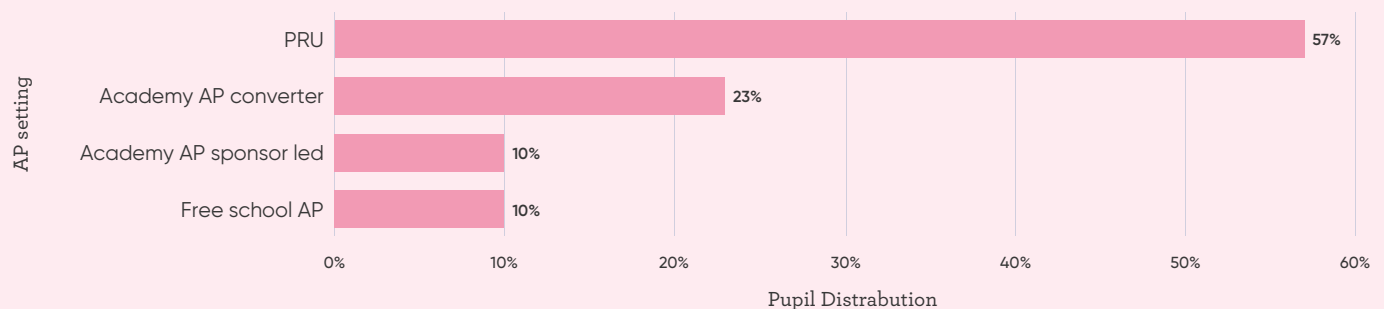


Source: [Department for Education](#).

For pupils who are single registered in AP, 25.5 per cent have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, and an additional 57 per cent required Special Educational Needs (SEN) support. Comparatively, in mainstream settings, 4.3 per cent of pupils have EHC plans and 13 per cent receive SEN support.<sup>7</sup>

Overall, the majority of pupils in state-maintained AP are enrolled in a PRU (57 per cent). Academy AP converters account for the second most populous settings, at 23 per cent of pupils. Academy AP Sponsor Led settings and Free School APs hold similar head counts at 1,323 and 1,357 pupils, respectively.<sup>8</sup> These schools differ in their funding models. Local authority maintained schools and PRUs are directly funded and regulated by the local authority, while free schools and academies have greater autonomy, with free schools being initiated by various groups and academies being run by academy trusts.

## Percentage of Pupil Distribution in State-Maintained APs



Source: [Department for Education](#).

<sup>7</sup> Department for Education, Academic year 2022/23 Special educational needs in England, June 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

# Methodology

## Overview of the survey questions and data collection procedures

Our survey sought to gather information about the quality metrics used in AP settings. Using a dissemination list of 320 AP settings, the survey was shared with a wide range of state-maintained APs. Results of the survey were anonymised, and participants were assured that their specific responses would not be connected to them once published.

The survey began with questions about the type of AP setting the participant represents and who commissions them. Participants were asked about the main reasons AP is used in their area, with options including preventing exclusion, reintegration into the mainstream, providing specialist support, and meeting specific duties for pupils with medical needs or education other than at school (EOTAS).

Additionally, the survey addresses the duration of placements in the AP setting, distinguishing between short-term and long-term placements. Participants were asked to specify the average length of these placements. The survey further investigates how pupils are referred to the AP, including options such as direct referral from the commissioning school, referral through charities or third sector organisations, and referral from parents or local authorities.

The survey then delved into the DfE's three-tier model for alternative provision, which includes targeted support in mainstream schools (tier 1), time-limited placements (tier 2), and transitional placements (tier 3). Participants were asked if they have heard of or read about this model and if they offer each tier of provision.

Next, the survey explored the specific measures used to assess the quality of AP. Participants were asked about their use of various measures, such as sharing information about absent or at-risk pupils, conducting pastoral meetings with mainstream schools, offering CPD and training, providing individual or group interventions, and supporting families. They were also asked to rate the appropriateness of measuring outreach, academic attainment, and attendance in assessing AP quality.

Finally, participants were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments or suggestions before submitting the survey.

Overall, the survey sought to gather insights into the quality metrics and practices employed in alternative provision settings, allowing for a better understanding of the effectiveness of AP and the support provided to pupils.

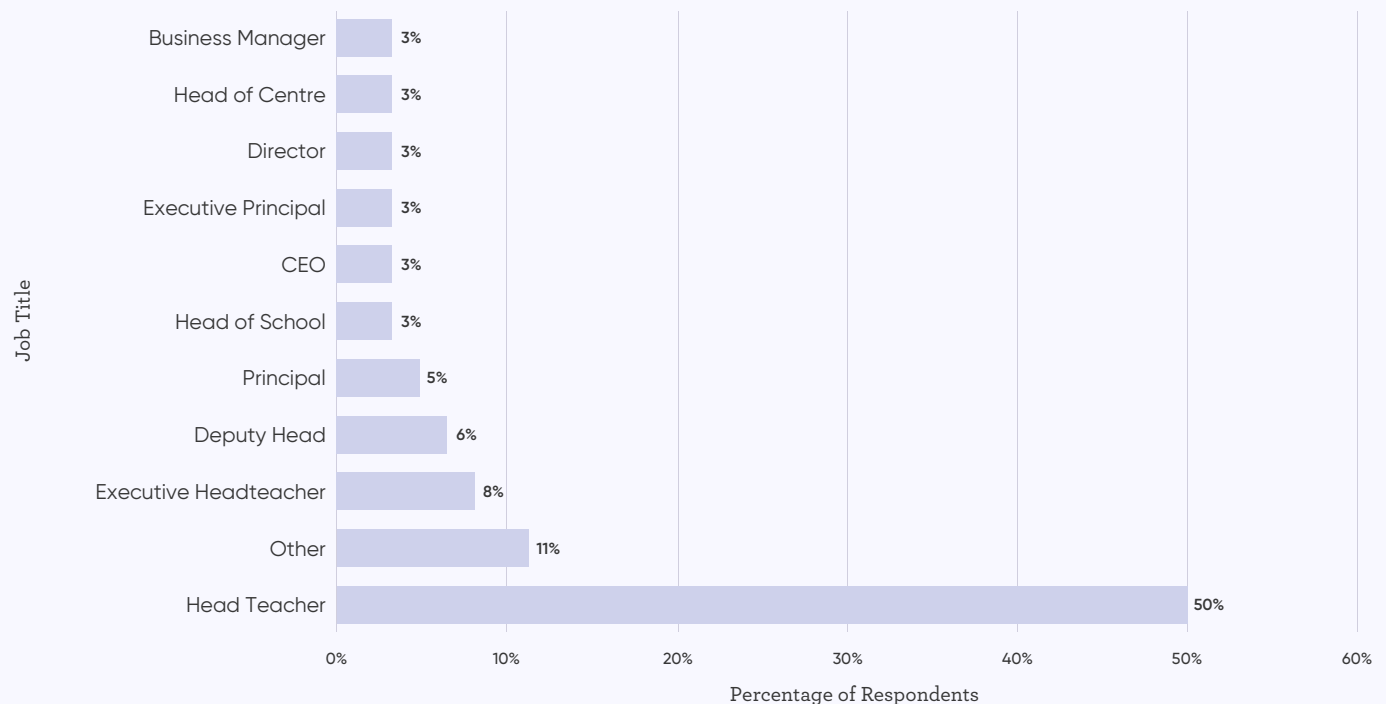
A copy of survey questions can be found in the Appendix.

# Descriptions of Alternative Provision Settings

## Survey Findings: Analysis of job titles and roles within alternative provision providers

Half of the survey participants were headteachers. The second most common category, 'Other', includes job titles such as owner, 14-16 curriculum manger/designated safeguarding lead, business manager, and assistant head.

### Respondent Job Title



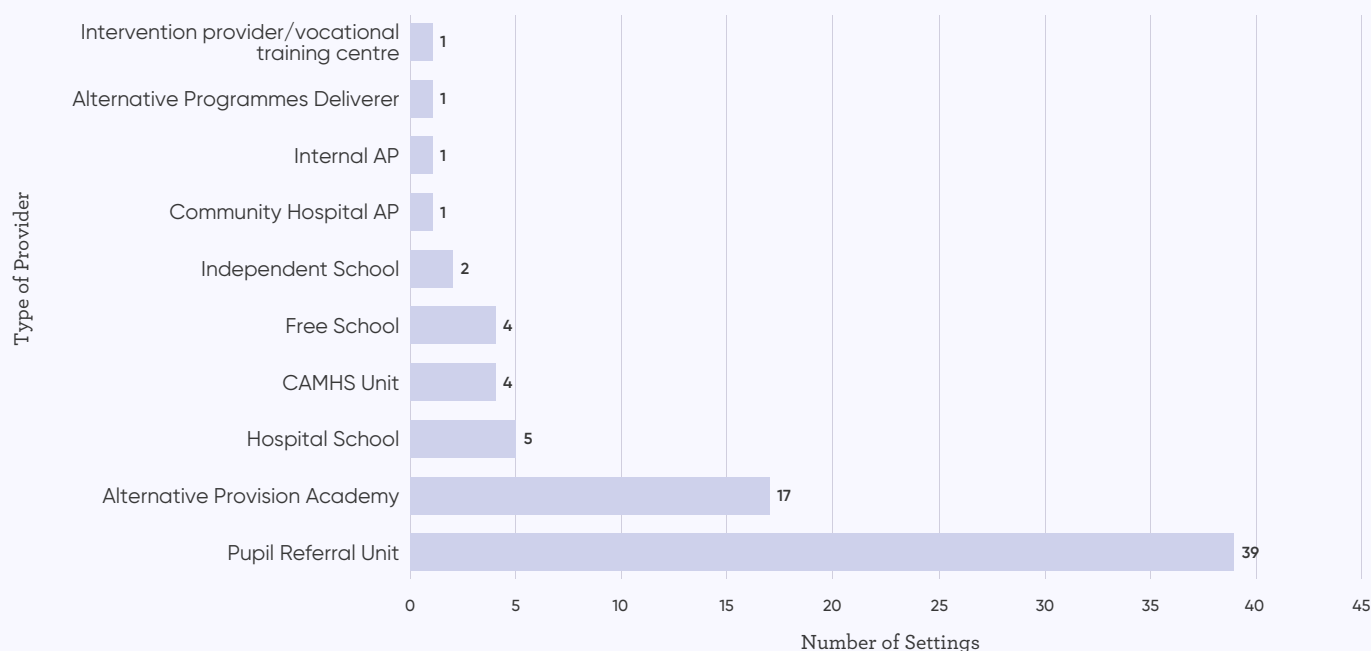


### Overview of the types of alternative provision schools

More than half of survey participants were from PRUs (63 per cent). This is similar to the national representation of PRU settings as they account for 53 per cent of all alternative providers.<sup>9</sup>

It should be noted that 14 responses indicated their setting as more than one type of placement. The most common of these combinations was PRU and hospital school.

#### AP Settings



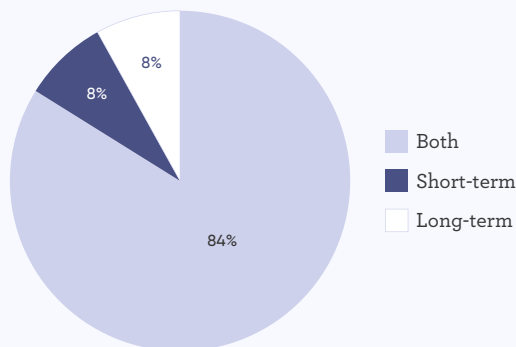
### Examination of the average placement length for pupils in alternative provision

The DfE estimates the average length of placements in AP are between one term and one academic year, with secondary-age pupils' placements likely to be longer.<sup>10</sup> In order to better understand the variety of placement lengths, our survey enquired about both long and short-term placements. The vast majority of providers cater to both. Five respondents offer only short (8 per cent) or long (8 per cent) placements for pupils.

<sup>9</sup> Department for Education, *Schools, pupils and their characteristics*, June 2023.

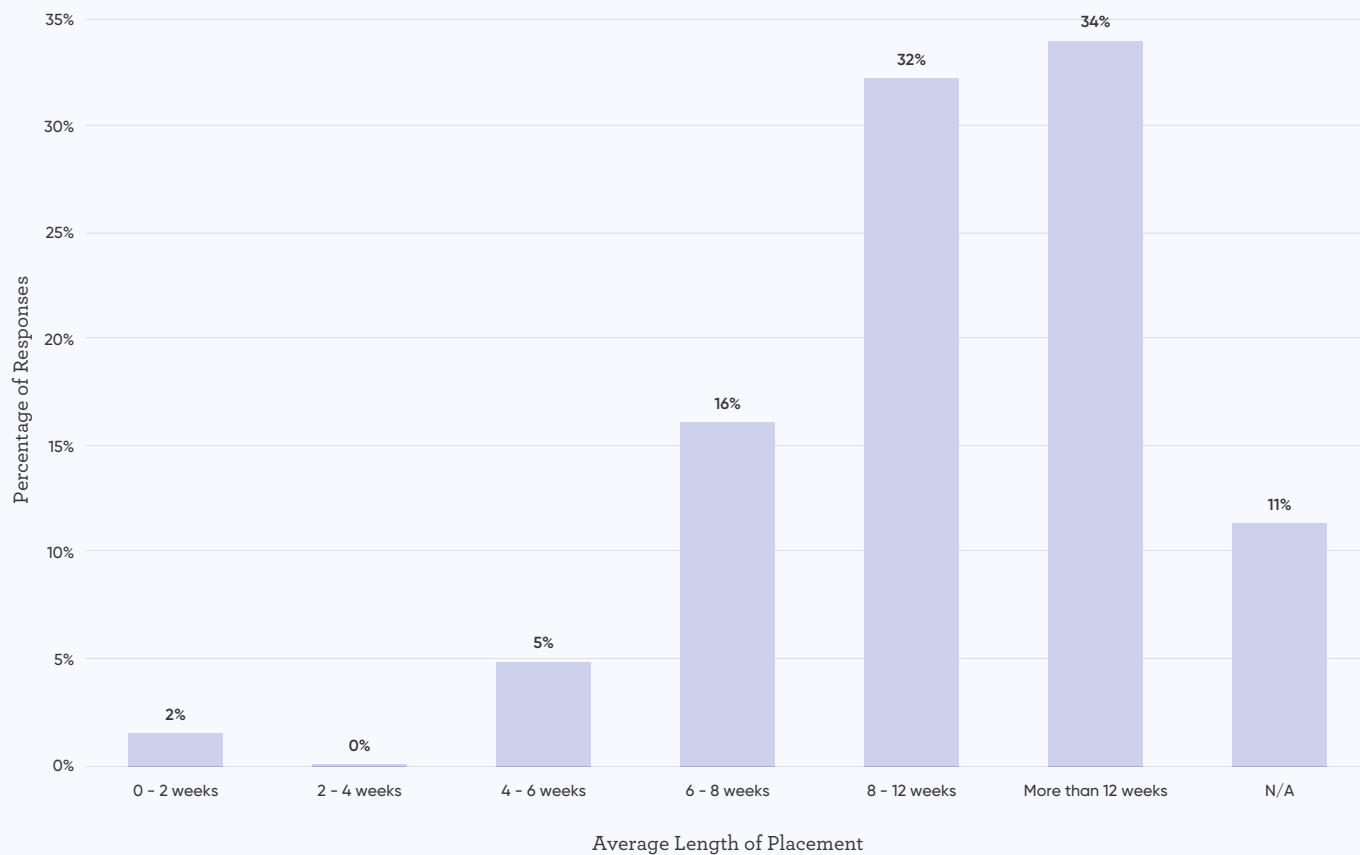
<sup>10</sup> Department for Education, *Alternative provision market analysis Research report*, October 2018.

### Long-term vs Short-term Placement Settings



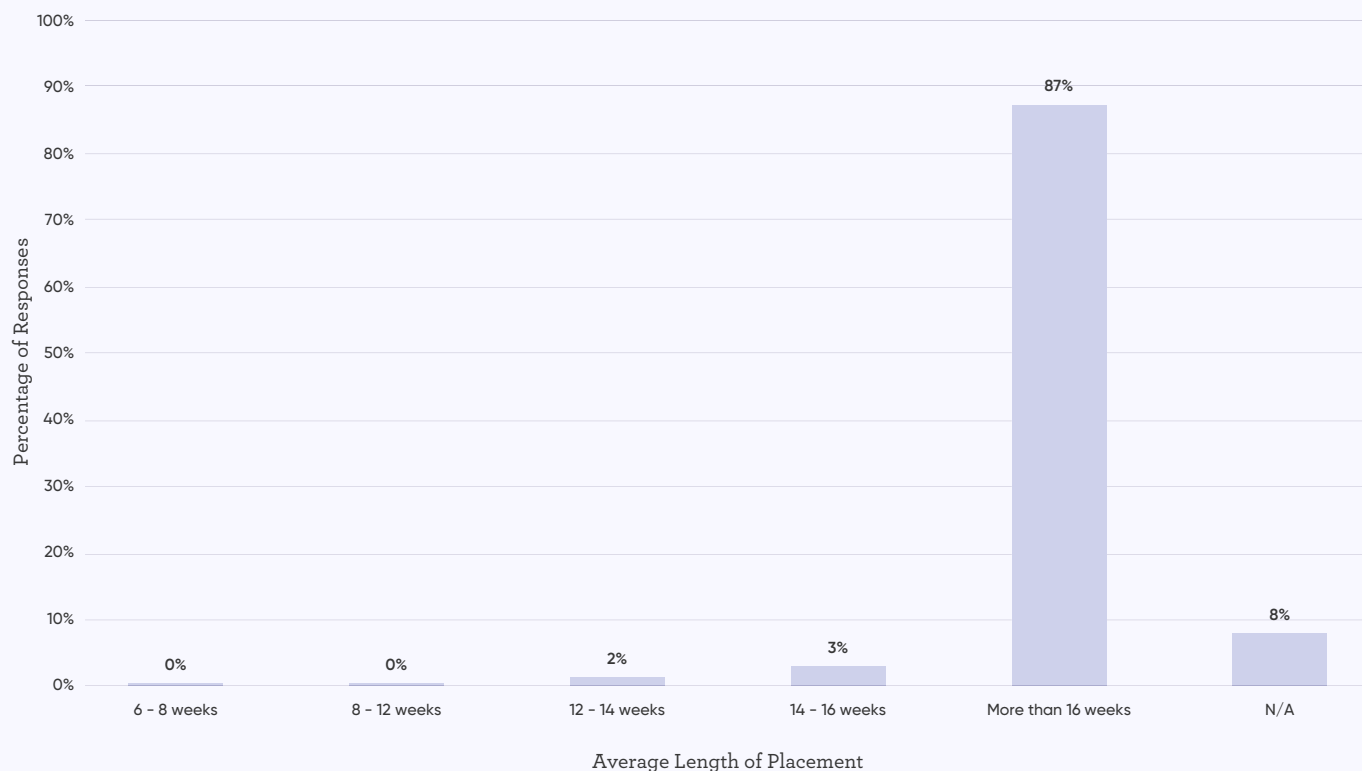
A closer look at short-term placements shows that, despite being considered short-term, most of these pupils remain in their AP setting for more than 12 weeks. Just one PRU surveyed reported 0–2 weeks as the average length of a short-term placement.

### Average Short-Term Placement



In line with DfE estimates, most long-term placements last longer than 16 weeks (87 per cent). One response indicated the longest placement was three and a half years and another that long-term placements can range from one to four years.

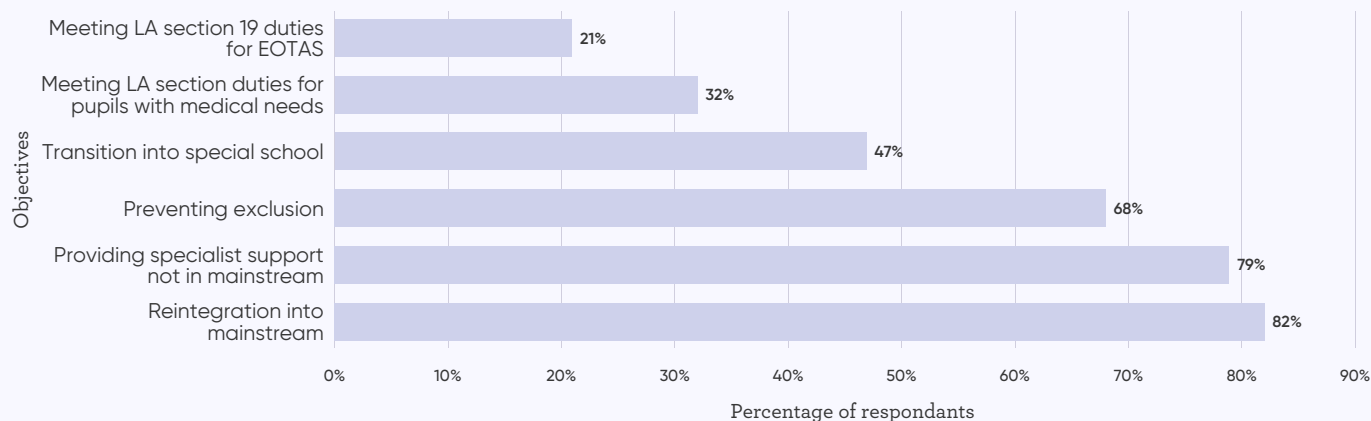
### Average Long-Term Placement



### Objectives for AP Settings

Responses suggest that reintegration into the mainstream and provision of specialist support are leading objectives for AP settings. Thirteen respondents reported meeting local authority section 19 duties for education other than at school (EOTAS) as an objective of their AP.

### Objectives of AP Settings



# Opinions on the Department for Education's Three Tier Model

The DfE's proposed three-tier model for AP aims to improve support for pupils who require educational alternatives due to exclusion, illness, or other reasons. As described in the SEND and AP improvement plan, the model emphasises early intervention within mainstream schools and addresses the existing issues of variability in quality, funding instability, and unregulated provision in AP. The key components of the model are as follows:<sup>11</sup>

**Tier 1 - Targeted Support:** Mainstream schools will offer targeted support to pupils whose needs affect their own or others' learning. This tier may include advice, coaching, self-regulation classes, or one-on-one support.

**Tier 2 - Time-Limited Placements:** Pupils needing more intensive support will receive time-limited placements in AP. These pupils will be dual-registered and supported to reintegrate into their original school as soon as feasible.

**Tier 3 - Transitional Placements:** This tier involves transitional placements for pupils who won't return to their previous school. Instead, they will be supported in transitioning to a different school or a suitable post-16 destination.

The proposed three tier model also seeks to break the link between individual pupil movements and funding, establishing AP-specific budgets for local SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) partnerships. These partnerships will determine the budget allocation for each tier of support and manage changes in demand. Funding stability is emphasised to ensure consistent support.<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, the DfE reforms introduce greater accountability through a new performance table and national performance framework for AP. The performance metrics include outreach support, attendance, reintegration, attainment (particularly in English and math), and post-16 transitions. While some welcome the accountability measures, concerns have been raised about introducing AP into a league table scenario, similar to mainstream schools.<sup>13</sup>

## Summary of AP providers' perspectives on the three-tier model

Overall, the majority (79 per cent) of respondents are familiar with the DfE's three-tier model for AP. 21 per cent of respondents were unfamiliar with the model. Of those who were unfamiliar, 69 per cent worked at PRUs, 15 per cent worked at Hospital Schools, seven per cent worked at an AP Academy, and seven per cent worked at an AP Free School. This is broadly proportionate to the number of providers from each setting type who are familiar with the model, meaning that there is not one type of AP that is less likely to be familiar with the DfE's proposal.

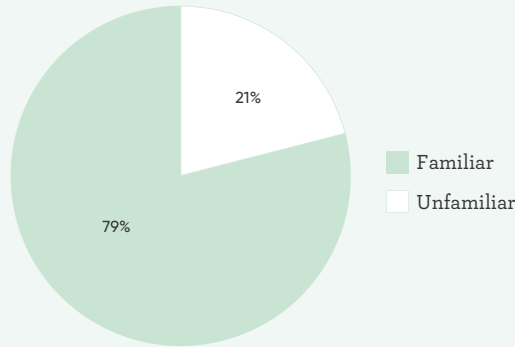
<sup>11</sup> Department for Education, [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) and Alternative Provision \(AP\) Improvement Plan](#), March 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

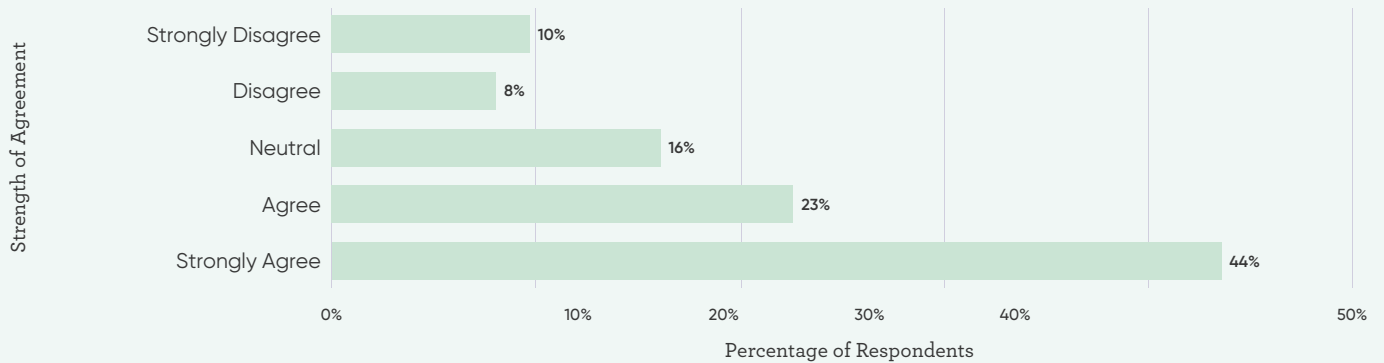
# Opinions on the Department for Education's Three Tier Model

## Familiarity with the DfE's Three Tier Model



Overall, providers agree that the three-tier model is appropriate for their placement setting. Of those who strongly disagree, two were unfamiliar with the three-tier model. Four strongly disagreeing participants were from PRUs, one was from a Hospital School, and one was from an AP Academy.

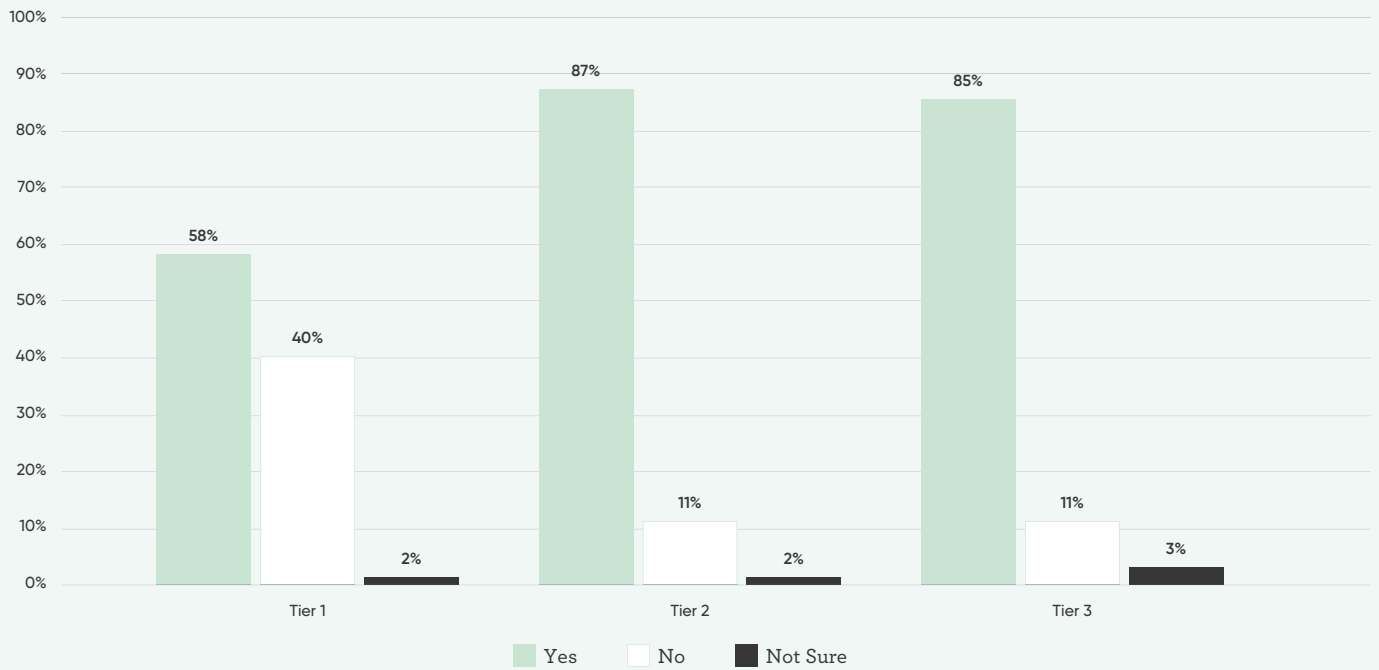
## How strongly providers agree that the three-tier model is appropriate for their setting



When asked about which tiers are offered in each participants' provisions, results indicate that tier 2 placement, (time-limited placements) are the most commonly offered, followed closely by tier 3. Tier 1, targeted support, appeared to be the least relevant of the tiers. This may be because tier 1 is designed to operate within the mainstream school.

# Opinions on the Department for Education's Three Tier Model

## Applicability of Tiers

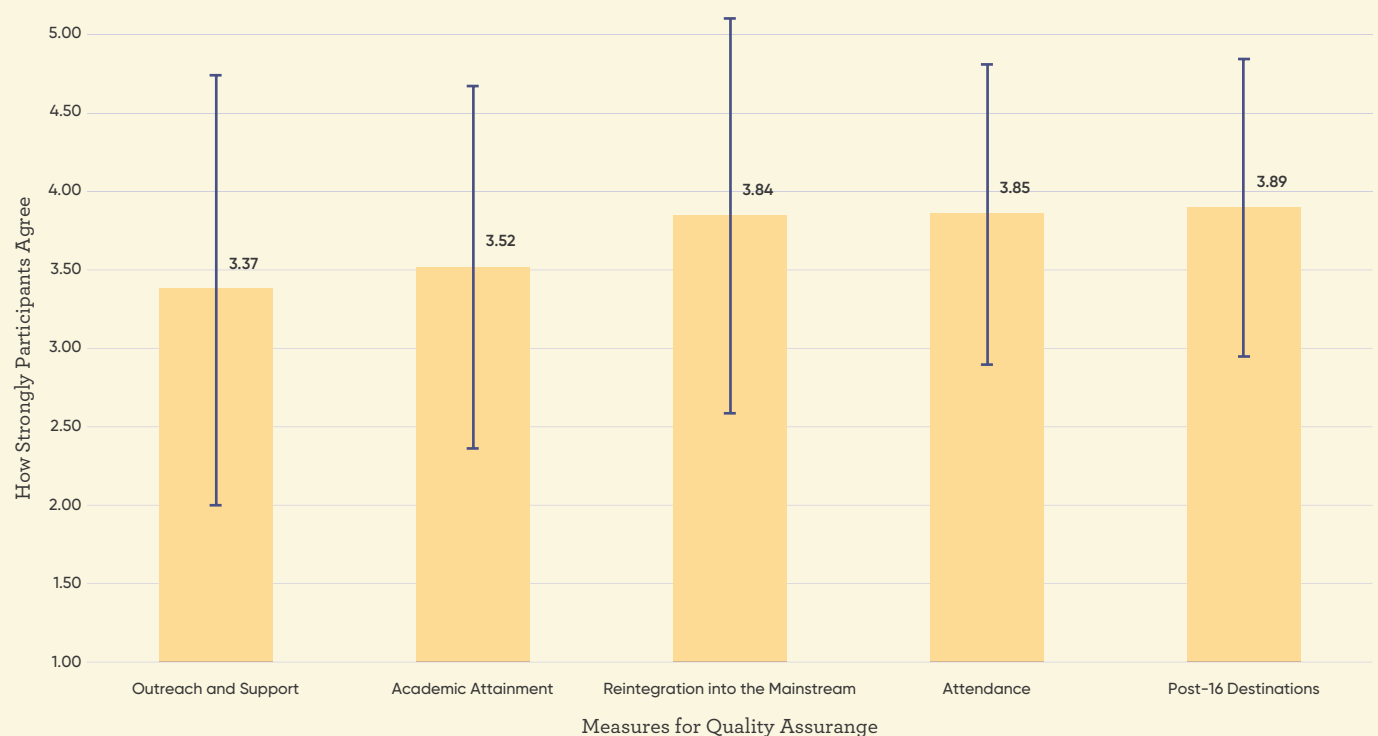


# Quality Metrics for Alternative Provision

## Evaluation of attainment, attendance, post-16 destinations, reintegration, and outreach/support as metrics

Participants were asked to rate the DfE's five metrics for quality assurance on a scale of one to five, reflecting how appropriate they considered each category in relation to their setting. Though each category was ranked similarly, responses suggest that post-16 destinations was marginally favoured as the most appropriate category.

### Familiarity with the DfE's Three Tier Model

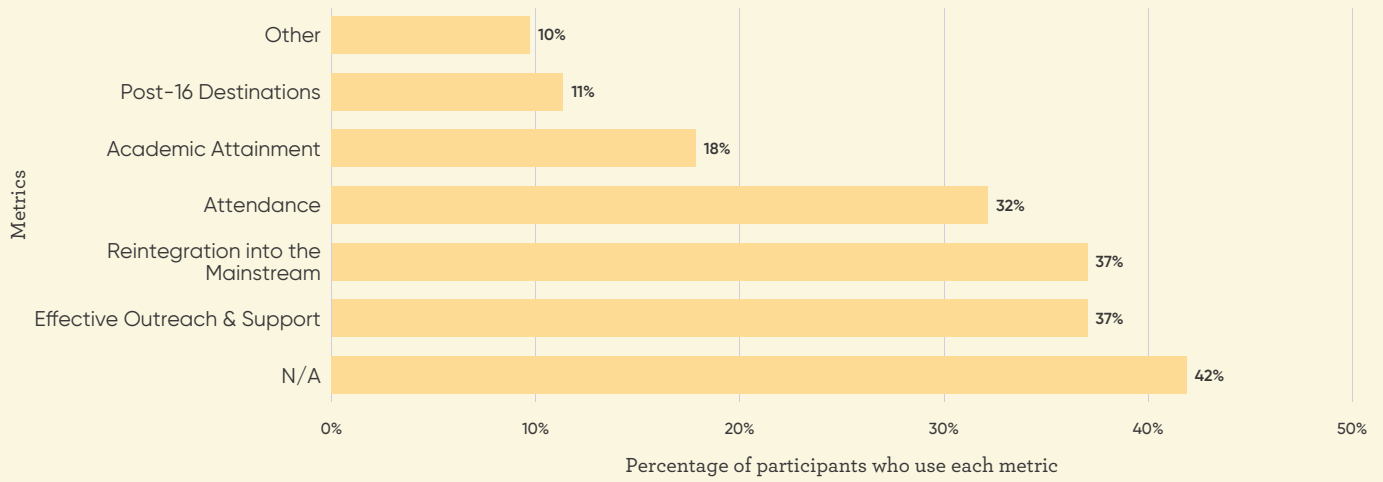


## Identification of key findings and trends regarding quality metrics

When asked about the relevance of the five metrics in measuring outcomes, respondents who indicated that their setting includes tier 1 support indicated that effective outreach and support and reintegration into the mainstream were key measures. When participants were invited to describe other measures beyond the five set out above, these measures included behaviour change, suspension rates and classroom engagement.

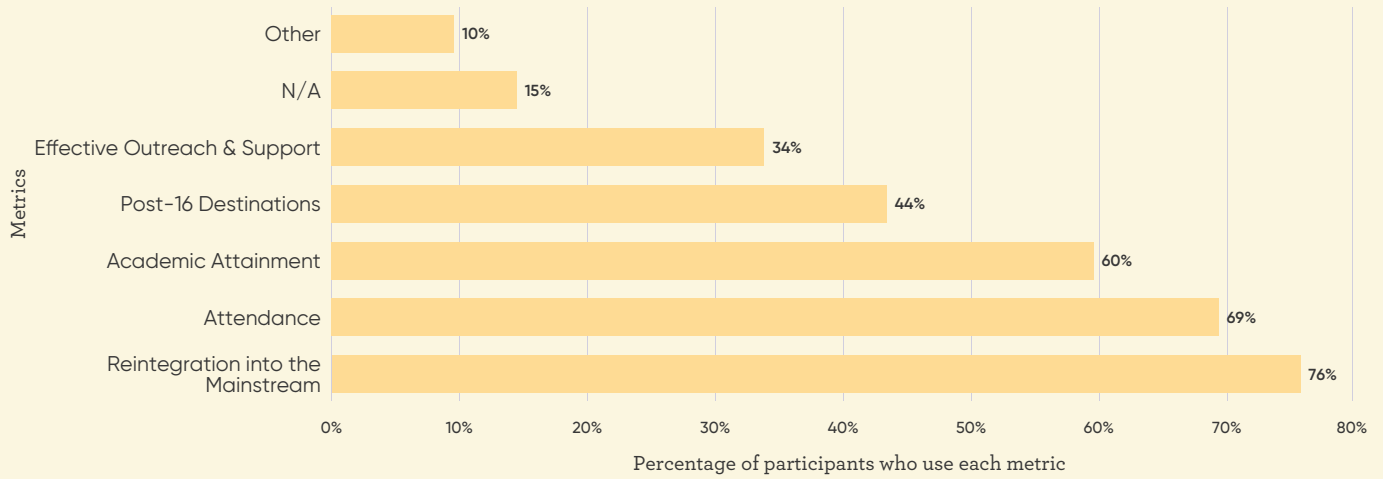
# Quality Metrics for Alternative Provision

## Tier 1 Metrics



The most relevant of the five DfE metrics for tier 2 were reintegration into the mainstream (recorded by 76 per cent of respondents) and attendance (recorded by 69 per cent of respondents). 'Other' metrics included in this response were social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) outcomes, and specialist intervention outcomes.

## Tier 2 Metrics

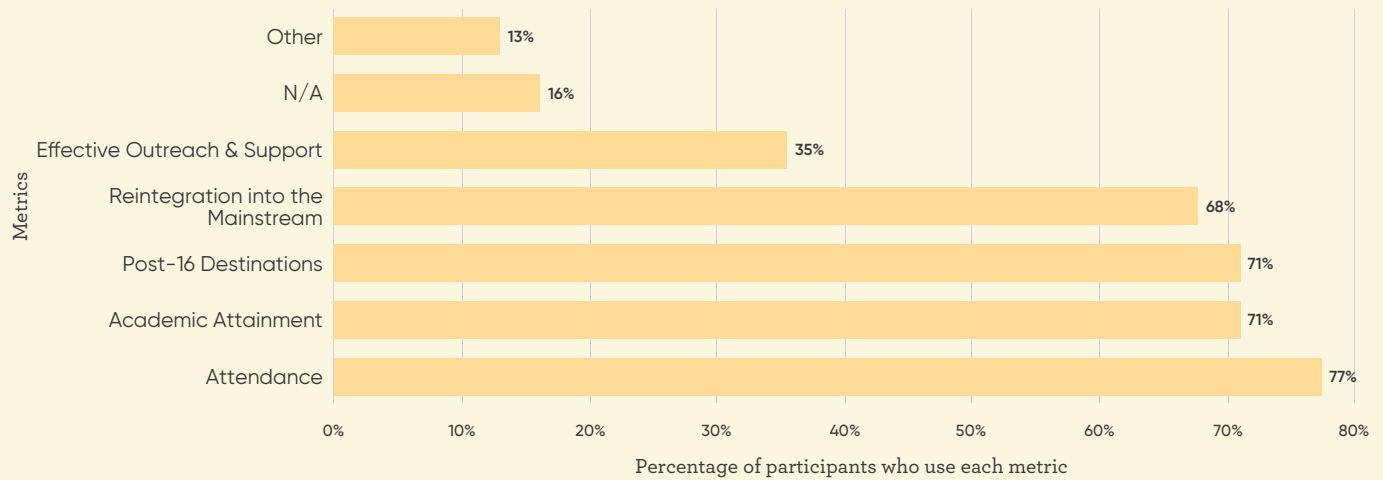


The most common metrics used for tier 3 provision were attendance (recorded by 77 per cent of respondents), academic attainment (recorded by 71 per cent of respondents), and post-16 destinations (recorded by 71 per cent of respondents). Other metrics reported include SEMH outcomes, improved engagement, reduced suspensions, and transitions into a special school.



## Quality Metrics for Alternative Provision

### Tier 3 Metrics



The feedback gathered from respondents revealed trends regarding the application of these metrics across different tiers of support.

For example, participants indicated that within tier 1 support settings, effective outreach and support, alongside successful reintegration into the mainstream, were pivotal measures. In tier 2, reintegration into the mainstream and attendance garnered support as key indicators. Meanwhile, for tier 3 provision, attendance and post-16 destinations held prominent places among the chosen metrics as 71 per cent of participants indicated they measure them.

Notably, beyond the predefined five metrics, providers consistently emphasised the importance of social and emotional health and wellbeing measures. This multifaceted perspective underscores the evolving landscape of quality assurance metrics in educational settings, reflecting a broader commitment to pupil success and development.

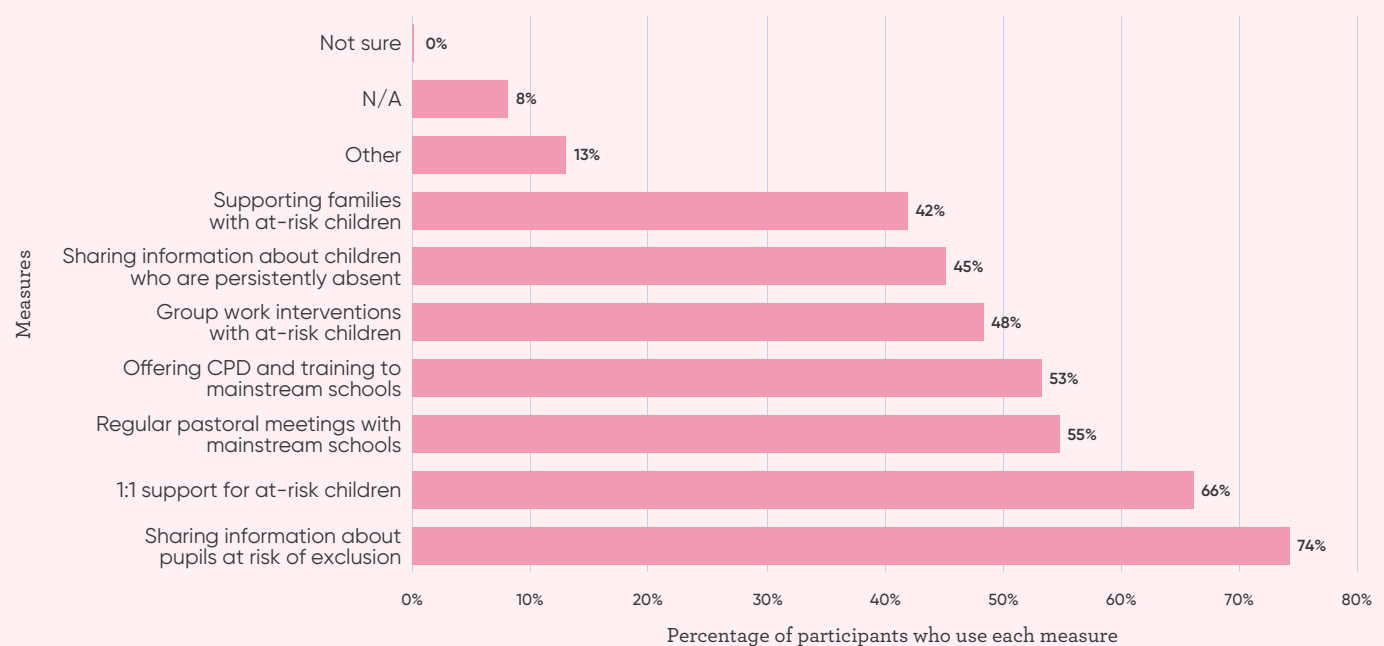
# Specific Quality Assurance Metrics Used by Alternative Provision Providers

## Overview of the specific metrics used by providers for quality assurance

The survey results indicate various types of partnerships established with mainstream schools to support at-risk pupils. The most common type of partnership is sharing information about pupils at risk of exclusion, reported by 74 per cent of providers. Following closely, 1:1 support for at-risk children was reported by 66 per cent of providers. Other prominent partnership methods include regular pastoral meetings with mainstream schools (55 per cent), offering continuing professional development (CPD) and training to mainstream schools (53 per cent), and implementing group work interventions with at-risk children (48 per cent).

A smaller number of respondents mentioned 'Other' methods, while a few respondents either indicated 'N/A' or were 'Not sure' about the types of partnerships.

## Types of Partnerships with Mainstream Schools



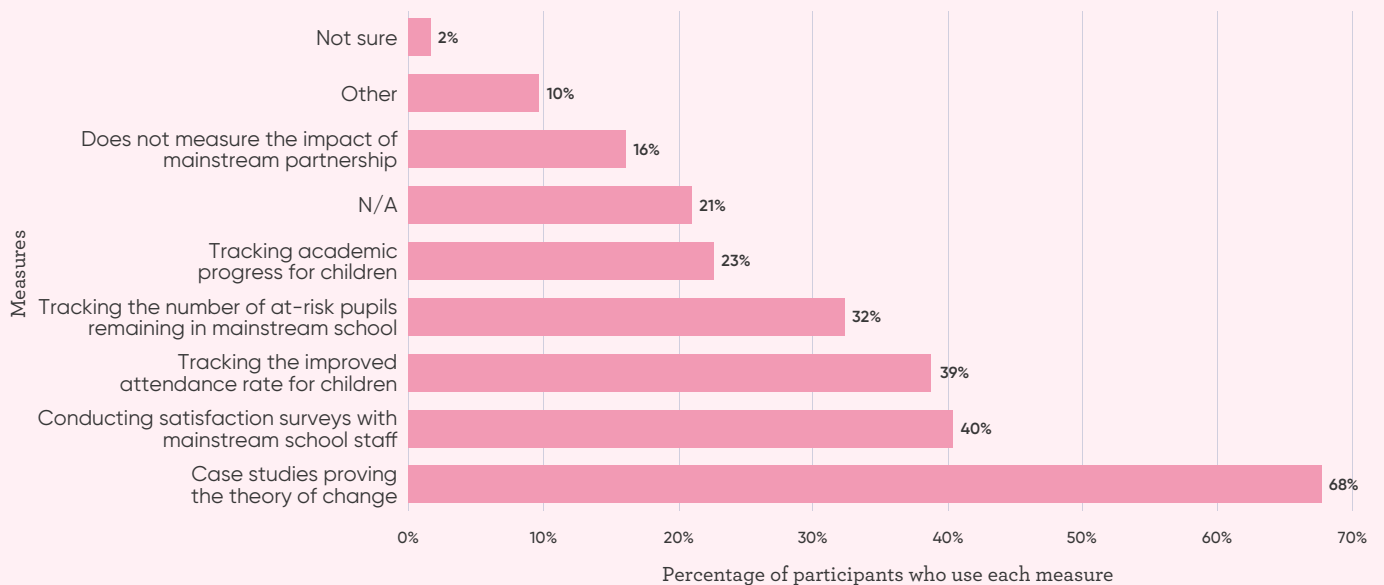
## Specific Quality Assurance Metrics Used by Alternative Provision Providers

The survey results reveal a variety of methods used to measure the effectiveness of outreach and support initiatives in educational settings. Case studies emerged as the most frequently mentioned method, with 68 per cent of respondents highlighting its significance. Another method involves conducting satisfaction surveys with mainstream school staff, as reported by 40 per cent respondents. These surveys gather valuable feedback from school staff, assessing the quality and impact of outreach and support measures.

In terms of quantitative metrics, tracking improved attendance rates for at-risk children stood out, cited by 39 per cent of respondents as a reliable indicator of success. Similarly, tracking the number of at-risk pupils who continue to thrive within mainstream school environments was identified by 32 per cent of respondents as a key metric to measure the effectiveness of outreach and support efforts. Academic progress for children was also recognised as a significant measure by 23 per cent of respondents.

Conversely, some respondents reported that certain methods were not applicable to their context. 21 per cent of providers selected 'N/A', suggesting that the listed methods did not align with their specific approaches to measuring outreach and support. Additionally, 16 per cent of respondents noted that their current methods did not effectively measure the impact of their partnerships with mainstream schools. A small number of respondents (10 per cent) employ 'other' methods, demonstrating the diversity of approaches used. Notably, only two per cent of providers expressed uncertainty regarding the methods employed to evaluate the effectiveness of outreach and support initiatives. This comprehensive range of approaches underscores the complexity and flexibility required to assess the outcomes and impact of outreach and support efforts in diverse educational environments.

### Measuring Outreach and Support



The methods employed to measure the progress of AP pupils are diverse, as shown by the survey findings. A majority of respondents (90 per cent) emphasised the importance of tracking the progress made by these pupils. This entails closely monitoring the developmental gains achieved by AP pupils over time. Moreover, case studies emerged as a popular method, with 84 per cent of providers acknowledging their value. Case studies provide concrete examples of individual pupil journeys, helping to illustrate the impact of AP programmes on a pupil's educational journey.

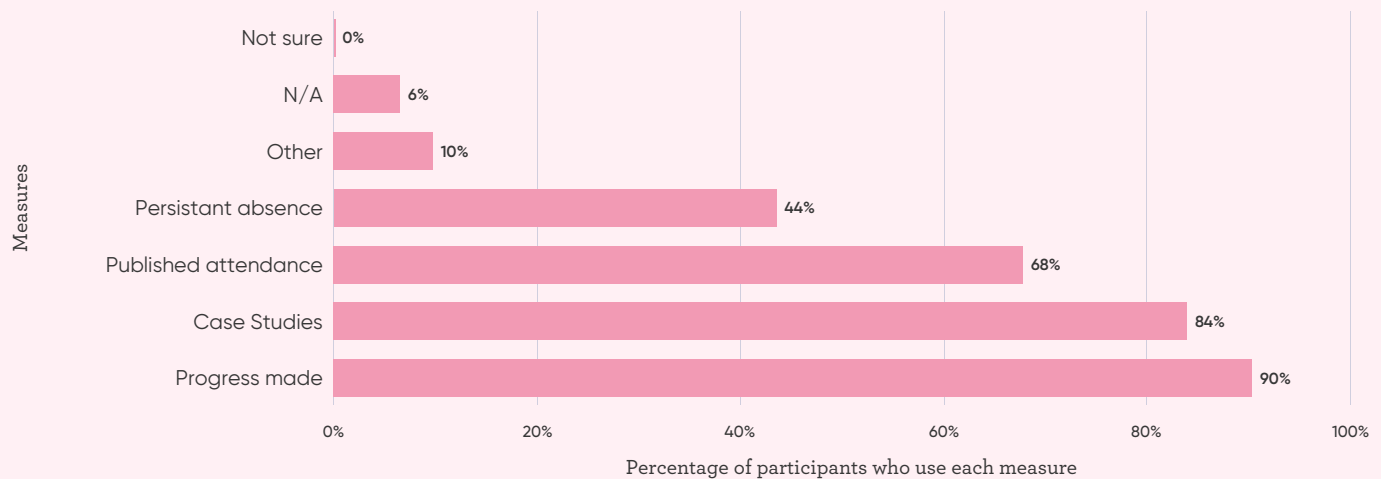
Published attendance records stood out as a commonly used metric, cited by 68 per cent of participants. This measure involves publicly sharing attendance data to gauge the regularity of pupil participation in AP. An additional 44 per cent of respondents identified monitoring persistent absence as a pivotal aspect of measurement, casting light on patterns of non-attendance that may warrant attention.

## Specific Quality Assurance Metrics Used by Alternative Provision Providers

Beyond these primary methods, 10 per cent of providers reported 'Other' approaches, encompassing an extensive array of metrics including PASS, SDQ, NGRT, SLCN assessments, suspension rates, behaviour points, social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) progress, overall wellbeing assessments, CAT tests, improvements in reading age, outcomes of EHC plans, and destination data.

None of the respondents expressed uncertainty ('not sure') about the methods employed, suggesting a clear understanding of the assessment approaches being used. This range of methods used to assess AP quality underscores the care taken to reflect the diversity of the AP sector when measuring the progress of AP pupils.

### Measuring AP Pupils



The methods employed for measuring pupil progress are varied, as evidenced by the survey findings. A significant number of respondents (87 per cent) said that they assessed literacy levels. An equal number of respondents (87 per cent) indicated the use of classroom assessments, such as formal tests and quizzes, as integral to their assessment strategies.

Reviewing pupil engagement and participation is conducted by 87 per cent of respondents as a means of measuring pupil progress. This involves analysing how actively pupils are involved in classroom activities and discussions. Furthermore, the use of GCSE results and improvements in emotional health and wellbeing were reported by 85 per cent of respondents each. These indicators provide insights into pupils' academic achievements and their overall psychological and emotional development.

Tracking progress in meeting specific engagement and participation goals was reported by 77 per cent of providers, reflecting a focus on targeted educational objectives. 66 per cent of respondents said they used standardised tests such as the Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT), whereas performance tasks and projects were used by 56 per cent of providers to evaluate pupils' practical skills and project-based learning.

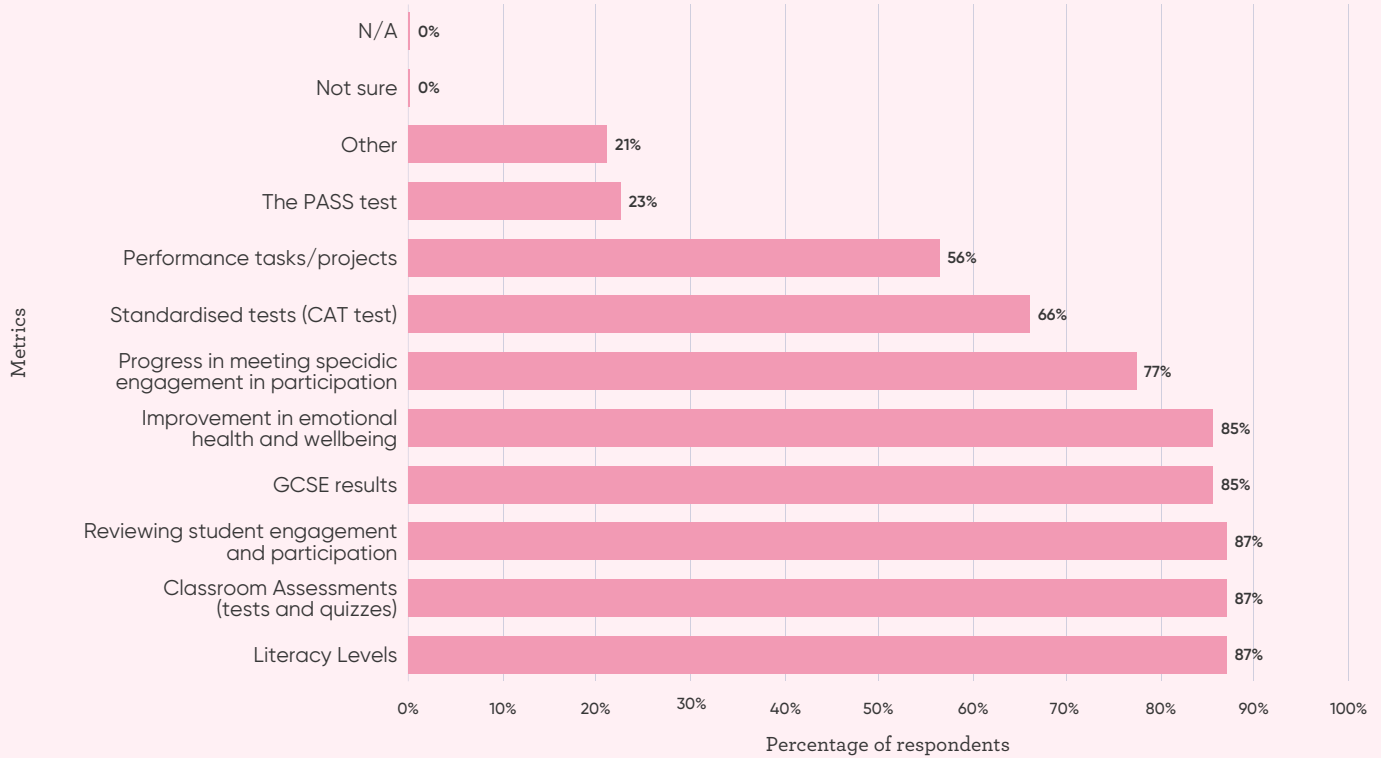
A smaller number of respondents (23 per cent) reported using the PASS test, an assessment tool for identifying cognitive strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, 'Other' approaches were cited by 21 per cent of providers. These encompassed diverse strategies such as:

- assessing literacy levels and classroom assessments
- evaluating personal development
- using methods like McSherry and Doyle
- the Readiness for Reintegration scales
- tracking engagement hours
- assessing non-GCSE exams like Functional Skills
- ipsative assessments
- measuring progress towards Education, Health and Care (EHC) outcomes
- the Boxall profile
- the SDQ profile, emotional literacy assessments
- the Thrive trauma recovery model

## Specific Quality Assurance Metrics Used by Alternative Provision Providers

No respondents marked 'not sure' or 'N/A', suggesting a clear understanding of the assessment methodologies being employed.

### Measuring Student Progress



The survey findings emphasise the diverse range of methods used to measure attendance. Almost all respondents (95 per cent) told us they use electronic monitoring systems as a primary means of tracking attendance. This entails using digital tools to monitor pupils' attendance patterns. As state-maintained schools, attendance data is regularly shared with the Department for Education.<sup>14</sup>

Phone calls emerged as another prevalent method, used by 87 per cent of respondents as a way of engaging with parents and guardians directly.

Home visits, conducted by 84 per cent of respondents, underline the proactive approach to attendance monitoring adopted by many providers. This involves educators visiting pupils' homes to establish the reasons behind any absence, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of attendance challenges. However, the frequency by which home visits occur was not recorded in this survey.

Almost half (45 per cent) reported using daily attendance registers taken on paper. This traditional method remains a staple in monitoring pupils' daily presence.

Among the options, six per cent of respondents cited 'other' methods. These include strategies such as:

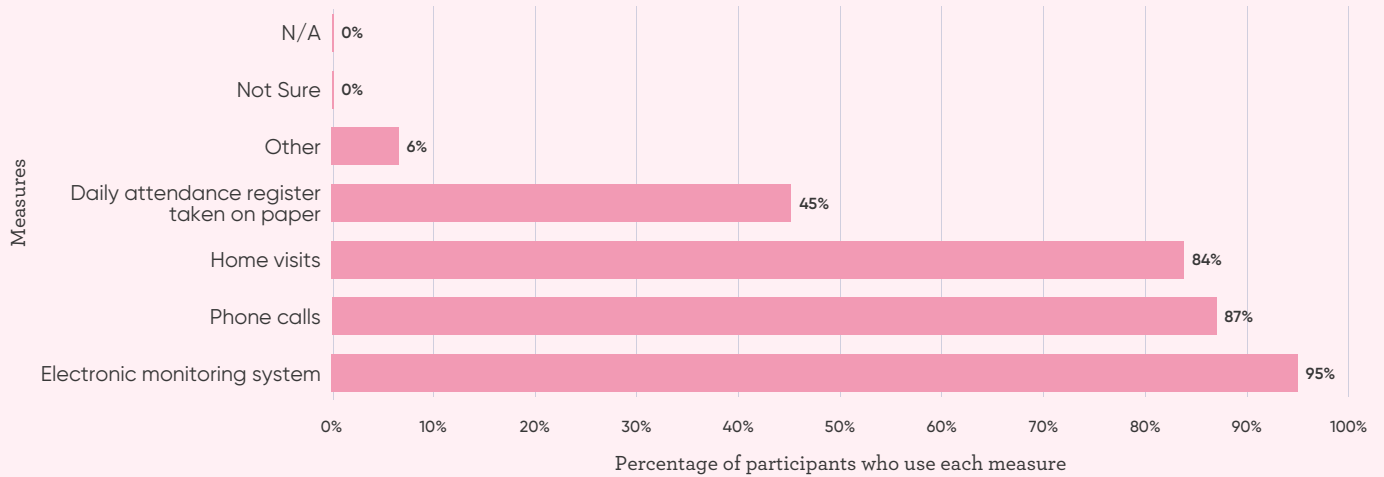
- sending texts and emails to pupils' homes
- the HRT project
- EBSA interventions
- attendance meetings
- each offering unique insights into attendance patterns and issues

<sup>14</sup> Department for Education, *School attendance data collection impact assessment State Funded Schools*, September 2023.

## Specific Quality Assurance Metrics Used by Alternative Provision Providers

It should be noted that no respondents marked 'not Sure' or 'N/A', highlighting their clear grasp of the attendance measurement methods being utilised.

### Attendance Measures



It should be noted that when asked about pupils for whom attendance data is not collected, almost all (95 per cent) of respondents reported that there are no pupils who they do not collect attendance data for. Three respondents said they do not collect attendance data for pupils in very specific circumstances:

- In patients on the local hospital ward.
- Children supported in their home school by outreach practitioner.
- Children taught in hospital beds are not placed on the academies formal register due to time taken to do so removes staff from teaching. The benefit to the child being placed on a register for a short stay is negligible. It is better to use staff time to teach.

### Reporting Progress

From the 62 responses received, a clear picture emerged regarding methods for measuring progress in collaboration with mainstream schools. Regular progress reports stood out as the most popular method, with 92 per cent of providers selecting it. This approach involves providing regular updates on the referred pupils' advancement.

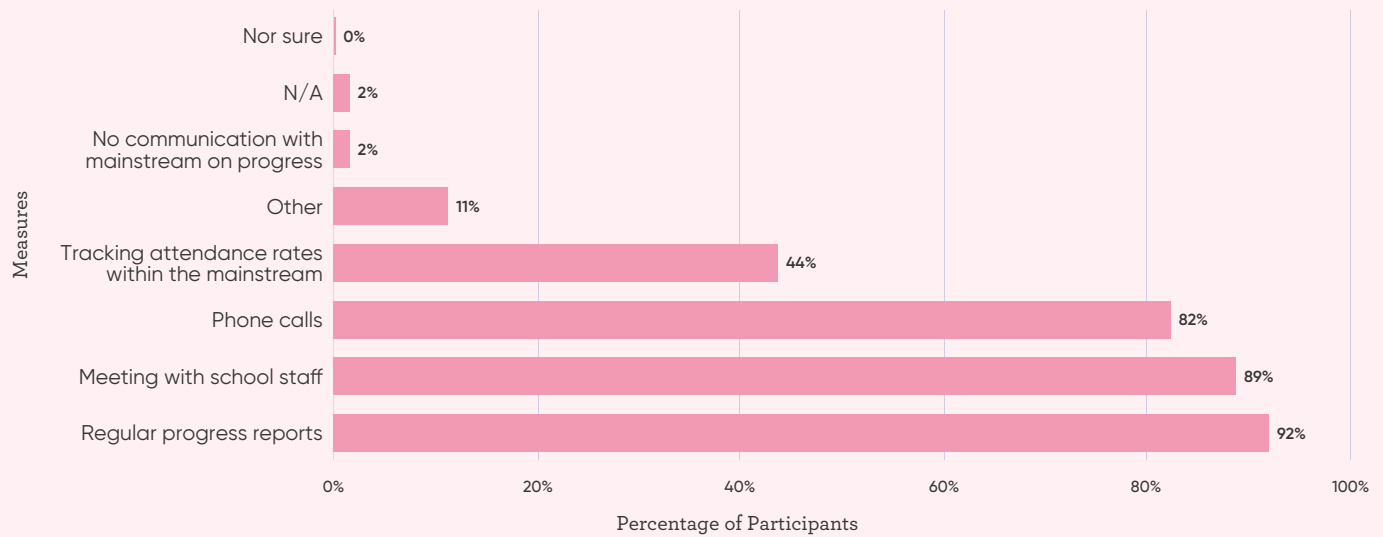
Close behind, meeting with school staff was chosen by 89 per cent of respondents as an effective way to share progress updates. Respondents felt that face-to-face discussions helped them to relay detailed information about the pupils' development.

82 per cent of providers said that phone calls helped them to keep mainstream schools abreast of pupil progress.

Tracking attendance rates within the mainstream was reported by 44 per cent of respondents. Just one respondent indicated no communication with mainstream schools about the progress of referred pupils, a clear exception to the trend of collaboration.

Lastly, seven respondents mentioned 'other' methods, which included variations of regular progress reports involving head teachers, regular progress review meetings, panel meetings, and review meetings.

### Measuring Progress with the Mainstream School



The survey sought to understand how APs measure and track the destinations of their AP pupils after they leave school, capturing both their educational and employment pathways.

A majority of respondents (74 per cent) highlighted the importance of regular tracking and follow-up with pupils after their departure from AP. This approach involves ongoing communication to gather insights into the pupils' chosen paths and their progression in both education or employment.

Collecting data from educational and employment institutions emerged as another popular strategy, reported by 63 per cent of respondents. This method entails collaborating with these external bodies to obtain information about pupils' post-AP educational and professional engagements. Collecting data from educational and employment institutions as a way of progress tracking requires further research to understand the mechanisms and consistency behind it. It is unclear how these settings ask schools/employers directly about previous pupils.

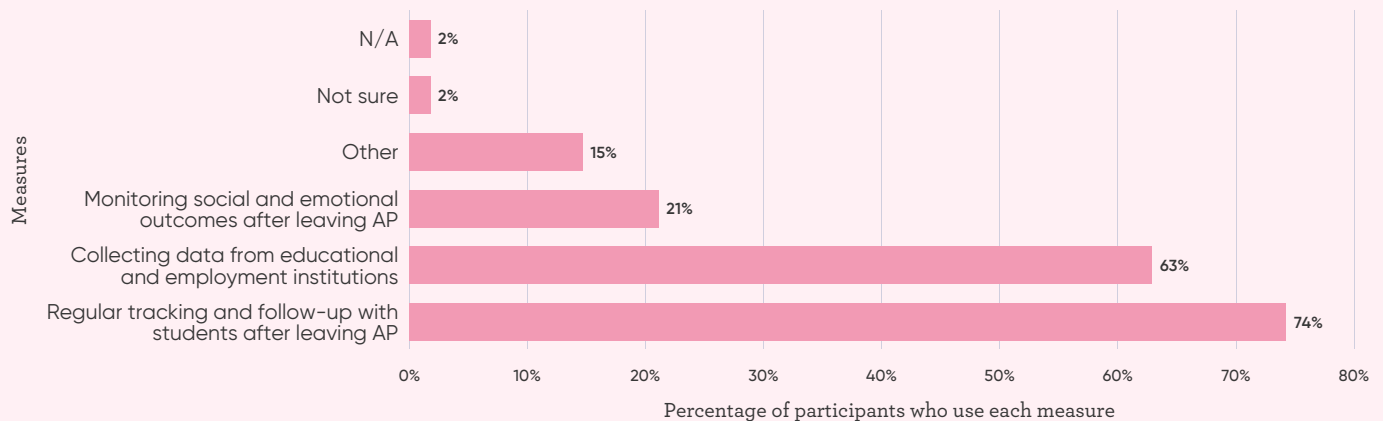
21 per cent of providers said that they monitored the social and emotional outcomes of students after they left AP. This involves gauging the pupils' well-being and personal development in their new contexts and could be incorporated in an annual alumni survey.

Only 2 per cent of respondent marked 'not sure' while one marked 'N/A'.

Moreover, 'other' methods were identified by 15 per cent of respondents, reflecting the diversity of strategies employed. These included:

- direct communication with the pupils
- a dedicated "moving on" coordinator to track and support pupils' transitions
- the involvement of a dedicated careers adviser to lead in this area
- post-16 pupil tracking
- collaborations with external teams to ensure pupils' successful transition and avoid becoming NEET (not in education, employment, or training)

### Measuring and Tracking Destinations



### Measuring destinations

The survey asked about the strategies employed by providers to support the successful transition of their AP pupils to educational and employment destinations once they leave the school premises.

From the responses gathered, a comprehensive understanding emerges about the strategies implemented to facilitate the smooth transition of AP pupils into their next phases of education and employment.

A significant majority of respondents (98 per cent) provide career and vocational guidance as key to smoothing the transition from AP. This provides pupils with valuable insights into potential career pathways and vocational opportunities, helping them make informed decisions.

Developing transition plans and goals with pupils stood out as another prominent method, supported by 88 per cent of respondents. Collaborating with pupils to set clear goals and devising detailed plans ensures a focused approach to their transition process.

Furthermore, 77 per cent of respondents affirmed the value of offering continued support even after pupils have left AP. This ongoing assistance might include addressing social and emotional challenges, answering queries and providing guidance during the early stages of their educational or employment journey.

None of the respondents expressed uncertainty ('not sure') or indicated that the question was not applicable ('N/A').

In addition, 'other' strategies were identified by five respondents, indicating the innovative approaches adopted by providers. These encompassed strategies such as:

- establishing direct links with local colleges for pre-enrolment discussions
- collaborating with SEND and post-16 support services
- commissioning independent careers advisors
- facilitating support after exam results day
- sending colleagues to colleges in September and October for Year 12 pupils

The survey question delved into the information collected on post-16 destinations, focusing on the strategies providers use to gather insights into the pathways their pupils pursue after leaving the educational setting.



## Specific Quality Assurance Metrics Used by Alternative Provision Providers

Collecting information on NEET rates was reportedly collected by 89 per cent of respondents. Annual post-16 destination surveys emerged as another crucial method, with 81 per cent of providers indicating their significance.

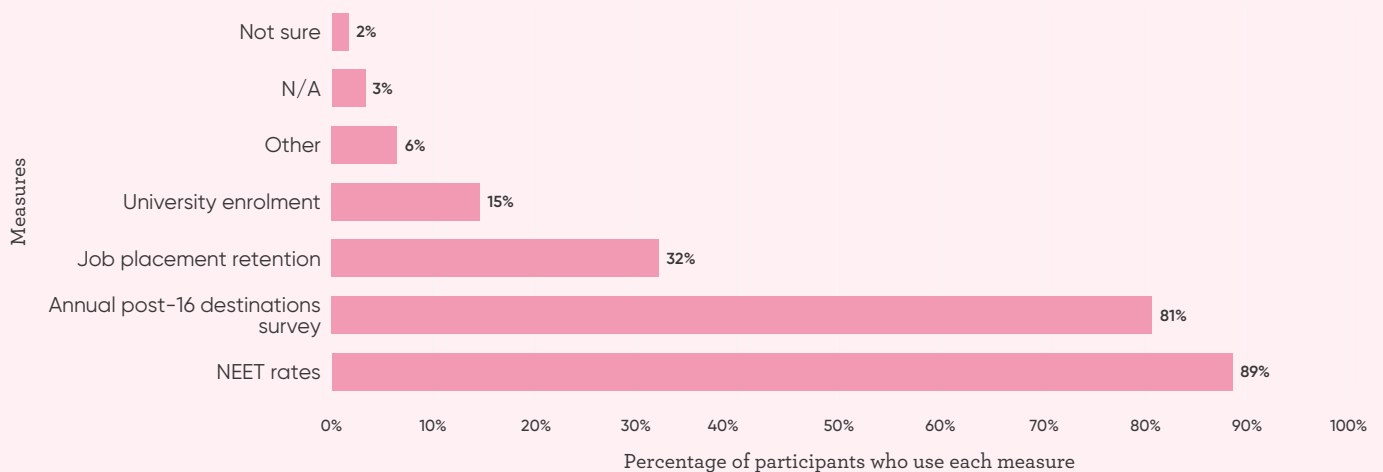
Measuring job placement retention was selected by 32 per cent of respondents, demonstrating a focus on evaluating how effectively pupils retain their employment positions. Moreover, 15 per cent of survey respondents collect information on university enrolment, reflecting an emphasis on tracking the number of pupils who continue their education at a university level.

Additionally, 'other' methods were highlighted by four respondents:

- gathering individual destination data
- job placement retention, university enrolment
- internal tracking
- conducting follow-ups with leavers

Only three per cent of respondents marked 'N/A', suggesting that most providers place high value in collecting this type of data. Similarly, just two per cent of respondents marked 'not sure', indicating a clear grasp of information gathering strategies from the vast majority of participants.

### Post-16 Measures



# Recommendations for Improving Alternative Provision Quality Metrics

## Identification of gaps and shortcomings in current metrics

When assessing the quality of AP, it is important to critically evaluate assessment metrics. This involves identifying areas where the current measurement tools and methods may fall short. Our survey suggests that gaps may include aspects of pupil progress or well-being that are not adequately captured by the current metrics, potential biases in the data collection process, or lack of alignment with the broader goals of AP. Specificity on how each metric is collected and measured requires further investigation.

As demonstrated by the survey findings, educational institutions employ a diverse range of methods to assess pupil progress and outcomes. The lack of consistency between APs' quality assurance measures points to the need for universal metrics suitable for AP settings, enabling transparent and readily-understood reporting on pupil progress. This would ensure that providers can accurately report on pupil progress while also instilling confidence in parents and mainstream educational settings that their students are appropriately cared for and educated in any alternative provision environment to which they are enrolled.

## Proposal for a comprehensive framework for evaluating quality in alternative provision

In alignment with the DfE's three-tier model, we recommend designing an AP performance framework based on a comprehensive assessment approach. The framework should incorporate the diverse range of methods identified in the survey, such as tracking progress, evaluating pupil engagement, monitoring post-16 destinations, and facilitating smooth transitions. This approach will ensure that performance standards encompass all the essential aspects of pupil development, aligning with the goals of increased attendance, attainment, re-integration into mainstream education, and progression to sustainable post-16 destinations. As outlined in the SEND and AP Improvement Plan, the framework should be adaptable to different educational contexts, allowing for fair and accurate evaluations across various types of alternative provision settings.<sup>15</sup>

Overall, the survey findings offer valuable insights that directly align with the SEND and AP Improvement Plan's goals and strategies. By leveraging these findings, the DfE can refine its SEND and AP improvement plan initiatives, develop evidence-based policies, and ultimately enhance the quality of AP, fostering their holistic development, successful transitions, and positive post-education pathways.

<sup>15</sup> DfE, SEND and AP Improvement Plan, March 2023.

# Conclusion

## Limitations

The project's small sample size (n = 62) is a research limitation. The voluntary nature of this survey means that this is a self-selecting sample. Providers who do not thoroughly assess provision quality may have opted to not participate in the survey. However, as there are 335 state-maintained AP providers in England, our survey constitutes 18.5 per cent of the population.

This survey does not account for external factors that could influence the strategies being used or the quality of AP. For example, regional policies and pupil demographics can significantly impact the effectiveness of strategies. Future projects on AP quality metrics should aim to include a wider variety of placement settings, such as unregistered providers, as well as geographical mapping.

Although this project investigates the types of measures employed by providers, the intended audience for these measures are not explored. Whether each measure is reported to the local authority, parents or the mainstream settings pupils come from remains to be seen.

These topics will be explored throughout the next phases of our ongoing research on AP quality.

## Summary of the main findings from the survey and analysis

The findings presented in this report underscore the complex landscape of AP, revealing a diverse array of strategies employed by educational institutions to measure pupil progress, support successful transitions, and evaluate the quality of their programs. The comprehensive nature of these efforts highlights a commitment to holistic pupil development, encompassing academic achievement, emotional well-being, and post-education pathways.

Key insights drawn from the survey data illuminate several important considerations. First, providers utilise a variety of metrics to assess pupil progress. Methods such as literacy level assessments, classroom evaluations, and engagement monitoring demonstrate a multifaceted approach to understanding pupil development.

Second, the emphasis on tracking post-16 destinations demonstrates a dedication to pupils' continued success beyond educational settings. Strategies encompass surveys, job placement retention assessments, and university enrolment tracking, providing valuable insights into pupils' chosen pathways.

Third, effective communication with mainstream schools emerges as a critical factor in pupils' journeys. Prior research suggests parents feel a lack of communication from mainstream schools after their child is referred to an AP.<sup>16</sup> Poor communication between the two institutions can impact the success of a transition.<sup>17</sup> To combat this, AP providers produce reports, undertake meetings, and make phone calls to support seamless transitions for referred pupils.

In conclusion, this report offers an overview of the AP landscape, demonstrating the multifaceted strategies employed to measure pupil progress, support transitions, and evaluate programme quality. These findings underscore the commitment of AP settings to educate and support some of the country's most vulnerable pupils.

<sup>16</sup> IntegratED, *AP Quality Toolkit*, 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Department for Education, *Investigative research into alternative provision*, IFF Research Ltd. P45, 2018.

# Appendix

## Survey questions

- Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_
- School Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- URN of the School: \_\_\_\_\_
- What type of AP setting are you representing? *(Check all that apply)*
  - a) Hospital School
  - b) CAMHS Unit
  - c) Pupil Referral Unit
  - d) Alternative Provision Academy
  - e) Free School
  - f) Independent School
  - g) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Who commissions your AP setting? *(Check all that apply)*
  - a) Local authority
  - b) Mainstream school
  - c) Home-educating parents
  - d) Other alternative provider
  - e) Special school
  - f) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- What are the main reasons AP is used in your area? *(Check all that apply)*
  - a) Preventing exclusion
  - b) Reintegration into the mainstream
  - c) Transition into a special school
  - d) Providing specialist support
  - e) Meeting LA Section 19 duties
  - f) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Have you used the AP Quality Toolkit? *(Mark only one option)*
  - a) I have read the AP Quality Toolkit and some aspects of the toolkit are implemented in my AP's curriculum
  - b) I have read the AP Quality Toolkit and the toolkit is used for quality assurance for my AP
  - c) I have heard of the AP Quality Toolkit but I do not use it
  - d) I have not heard of the AP Quality Toolkit and I do not use it
- Are placements at your school setting long-term or short-term? *(Mark only one option)*
  - a) Short-term
  - b) Long-term
  - c) Both
- How long is your average short-term placement? *(Mark only one option)*
  - a) 0 - 2 weeks
  - b) 2 - 4 weeks
  - c) 4 - 6 weeks
  - d) 6 - 8 weeks
  - e) 8 - 12 weeks
  - f) More than 12 weeks
  - g) N/A
  - h) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- How long is your average long-term placement? *(Mark only one option)*
  - a) 6 - 8 weeks
  - b) 8 - 12 weeks c
  - c) 12 - 14 weeks
  - d) 14 - 16 weeks
  - e) More than 16 weeks
  - f) N/A
  - g) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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- How are pupils referred to your AP? (*Select all that apply*)
  - a) Direct referral from the commissioning school
  - b) Referral through a charity or third sector organisation
  - c) Referral from parents
  - d) Referral from local authority
  - e) Referral/direction from Fair Access Panel
  - f) Admitted to hospital
  - g) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Have you heard of or read about the Department for Education's three-tier model for alternative provision?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
- On a scale of 1 - 5, how strongly do you agree that the three-tier model is an appropriate model for your AP?
  - a) 1 Strongly disagree
  - b) 2
  - c) 3
  - d) 4
  - e) 5 Strongly agree
- Do you offer Tier 1 (targeted support in mainstream schools) provision?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Not sure
- Do you record the outcomes for pupils who fall into Tier 1? If so, which of the following outcomes do you look at? (*Select all that apply*)
  - a) Effective outreach and support
  - b) Attendance
  - c) Academic attainment
  - d) Post-16 destinations
  - e) Reintegration into the mainstream
  - f) Not sure
  - g) N/A
  - h) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you offer Tier 2 (time-limited placements) provision?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Not sure
- Do you record the outcomes for pupils who fall into Tier 2? If so, which of the following outcomes do you look at? (*Select all that apply*)
  - a) Effective outreach and support
  - b) Attendance
  - c) Academic attainment
  - d) Post-16 destinations
  - e) Reintegration into the mainstream
  - f) Not sure
  - g) N/A
  - h) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you offer Tier 3 (transitional placements) provision?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Not sure
- Do you record the outcomes for pupils who fall into Tier 3? If so, which of the following outcomes do you look at? (*Select all that apply*)
  - a) Effective outreach and support
  - b) Attendance
  - c) Academic attainment
  - d) Post-16 destinations
  - e) Reintegration into the mainstream
  - f) Not sure
  - g) N/A
  - h) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- What types of partnerships do you have with mainstream schools in identifying at-risk pupils? (*Select all that apply*)
  - a) Sharing information about children who are persistently absent
  - b) Sharing information about pupils at risk of exclusion
  - c) Regular pastoral meetings with mainstream schools
  - d) Offering CPD and training to mainstream schools
  - e) 1:1 support for at-risk children
  - f) Group work interventions with at-risk children
  - g) Supporting families with at-risk children
  - h) Not sure
  - i) N/A
  - j) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix

- How do you measure effective outreach and support? *(Select all that apply)*
  - a) Tracking academic progress for children supported in Tier 1
  - b) Tracking the improved attendance rate for children supported in Tier 1
  - c) Case studies of single success stories which prove the theory of change behind our interventions
  - d) Conducting satisfaction surveys with mainstream school staff
  - e) Tracking the number of at-risk pupils who remain in mainstream school
  - f) We have partnerships with mainstream schools but do not measure the impact of partnerships
  - g) Not sure
  - h) N/A
  - i) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- On a scale of 1 - 5, how strongly do you agree that measuring outreach and support is an effective way of assessing AP quality?
  - a) 1 Strongly disagree
  - b) 2
  - c) 3
  - d) 4
  - e) 5 Strongly agree
- Do you record any of the following? *(Select all that apply)*
  - a) Progress made
  - b) Persistent absence
  - c) Case studies
  - d) Published attendance
  - e) Not sure
  - f) N/A
  - g) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- What methods do you use to assess pupil progress? *(Select all that apply)*
  - a) Literacy levels
  - b) Classroom assessments (e.g., tests and quizzes)
  - c) Standardised tests (e.g., CAT test)
  - d) Performance tasks/projects
  - e) Progress in meeting specific predetermined targets
  - f) Reviewing pupil engagement and participation
  - g) GCSE results
  - h) Improvement in emotional health and wellbeing
  - i) The PASS test
  - j) Reviewing pupil engagement and participation
  - k) Not sure
  - l) N/A
  - m) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- On a scale of 1 - 5, how strongly do you agree that measuring academic attainment is an effective way of assessing AP quality?
  - a) 1 Strongly disagree
  - b) 2
  - c) 3
  - d) 4
  - e) 5 Strongly agree
- Which of the following methods do you use to measure pupil attendance in your AP school? *(Select all that apply)*
  - a) Daily attendance register taken on paper
  - b) Electronic monitoring system
  - c) Phone calls
  - d) Home visits
  - e) Not sure
  - f) N/A
  - g) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Are there any pupils for whom you do not collect attendance data? If so, please describe this cohort in the 'other' category.
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Not sure
  - d) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- On a scale of 1 - 5, how strongly do you agree that measuring attendance is an effective way of assessing AP quality?
  - a) 1 Strongly disagree
  - b) 2
  - c) 3
  - d) 4
  - e) 5 Strongly agree
- How do you communicate with mainstream schools about the progress of referred pupils? *(Select all that apply)*
  - a) Regular progress reports
  - b) Meeting with school staff
  - c) Phone calls
  - d) Tracking attendance rates within the mainstream
  - e) We do not communicate with mainstream schools about the progress of referred pupils
  - f) Not sure
  - g) N/A
  - h) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix

- How do you measure and track the destinations of your AP pupils after leaving your school, including their educational and employment destinations? *(Select all that apply)*
  - a) Regular tracking and follow-up with pupils after leaving AP
  - b) Collecting data from educational and employment institutions
  - c) Monitoring social and emotional outcomes after leaving AP
  - d) Not sure
  - e) N/A
  - f) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- What strategies do you use to support the successful transition of your AP pupils to educational and employment destinations after leaving your school? *(Select all that apply)*
  - a) Developing transition plans and goals with pupils
  - b) Providing career and vocational guidance
  - c) Offering continued support after leaving
  - d) Not sure
  - e) N/A
  - f) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- On a scale of 1 - 5, how strongly do you agree that measuring reintegration into the mainstream is an effective way of assessing AP quality?
  - a) 1 Strongly disagree
  - b) 2
  - c) 3
  - d) 4
  - e) 5 Strongly agree
- On a scale of 1 - 5, how strongly do you agree that measuring post-16 destinations is an effective way of assessing AP quality?
  - a) 1 Strongly disagree
  - b) 2
  - c) 3
  - d) 4
  - e) 5 Strongly agree
- What kind of information do you collect on post-16 destinations? *(Select all that apply)*
  - a) Annual post-16 destination survey
  - b) Job placement retention
  - c) University enrolment
  - d) NEET rates
  - e) Not sure
  - f) N/A
  - g) Other: \_\_\_\_\_