Supplementary guidance:
learners with additional learning needs (ALN)

Autumn 2022

This guidance is also available in Welsh.

Estyn

The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. We are responsible for inspecting:

- ⚲ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities
- ⚲ primary schools
- ⚲ secondary schools
- ⚲ all-age schools
- ⚲ special schools
- ⚲ learner referral units
- ⚲ independent schools
- ⚲ further education
- ⚲ independent specialist colleges
- ⚲ adult community learning
- ⚲ local authority education services for children and young people
- ⚲ teacher education and training
- ⚲ Welsh for adults
- ⚲ work-based learning
- ⚲ learning in the justice sector

We also:

- ⚲ report to Senedd Cymru and provide advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the Welsh Government and others
- ⚲ make public good practice based on inspection evidence

| **What is the purpose?** |
| To provide further guidance to inspectors, to use alongside the sector guidance, when evaluating the outcomes and provision for learners with additional learning needs. |
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| **For whom is it intended?** |
| For non-maintained nursery settings, maintained and independent primary and secondary schools, special schools, and learner referral units. |
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| **From when should the guidance be used?** |
| September 2021 |

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Supplementary guidance

The key Estyn documents that guide inspection activity are the inspection guidance handbooks for each sector. However, we also produce supplementary guidance to help inspectors to consider specific aspects of education and training further.

The supplementary guidance documents set out some key principles, considerations and resources for inspectors. They relate to all sectors that we inspect, unless they state that they are for a specific sector. They expand on certain aspects of education/training (e.g. the inspection of literacy) or on ways of conducting inspections (e.g. the use of learning walks) or specific inspection arrangements (e.g. guidance on inspecting church schools).

The supplementary guidance documents do not aim to be comprehensive. Inspectors are not required to work through them exhaustively when covering any specific aspect on an inspection. However, inspectors may find them useful when responding to specific emerging questions that arise during inspections or when they wish to reflect or investigate further.

The supplementary guidance documents may help schools gain an understanding of our inspection arrangements. They may also be helpful to schools in evaluating specific aspects of their own provision.

Our inspection work is based on the following principles:

- Inspectors will approach inspection with a positive mindset to ensure it is the best possible professional learning experience for the staff in each school
- Inspectors will take a learner-focused approach to inspection
- Inspectors will always focus strongly on the quality of teaching and learning
- Inspectors will seek out well-considered innovative practice
- Inspectors will tailor the inspection activities according to the circumstances in each school as far as possible
- Inspectors will be agile and responsive to emerging findings and will use the increased range of inspection tools and approaches available
- Inspectors will consider everything in the inspection framework, but will only report on the key strengths and weaknesses within each school

Introduction

This guidance replaces our previous guidance on 'Pupils who require extra support, including those with special educational needs (SEN)'. It supports inspectors in evaluating the outcomes and provision for learners who have **additional learning needs (ALN)**. It includes helpful information to support the inspection of outcomes and provision for learners with ALN.

Inspectors should use this guidance alongside their own sector guidance. They may also find it helpful to refer to our supplementary guidance on related issues that influence outcomes and provision for these learners, for example, on reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment and wellbeing.

ALN Reform

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill was passed by the National Assembly for Wales in December 2017. The legislation received Royal Assent in January 2018 and became the [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018](link) ('the Act': National Assembly for Wales, 2018). The Act made provision for a new statutory framework for supporting children and young people with ALN.

Under the Act, the term special educational need (SEN) was replaced with the term additional learning need (ALN). The term 'special educational provision' was replaced with 'additional learning provision'. The implementation of these changes was originally scheduled to take place over a three-year period, from September 2020 to August 2023 alongside delivery of the wider ALN transformation programme. However, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, this period did not commence until September 2021. During the implementation period existing SEN legislation continues to apply and will continue to do so until the implementation period is concluded. Further information on the key changes introduced by the Act can be found in Appendix 1.

Over recent years, there has been variation in how schools and local authorities (LAs) have used the terms 'SEN' and 'ALN.' During the implementation period, it is likely that there will continue to be inconsistency in the terminology used by different schools. In particular, the term SEN may still be used during the period of implementation for those learners who have a statement of SEN rather than an individual development plan (IDP). Inspectors should not focus on the terminology used. Instead, they should evaluate how well the school plans, monitors and reviews provision for all learners who have ALN.

Iaith Pawb, the Welsh Assembly Government's action plan for a bilingual Wales, acknowledges the right of learners with ALN to receive provision in the language of their choice as set out in the revised special educational needs Code of Practice for Wales (2004).

The ALN Code for Wales contains statutory guidance schools, further education institutions, local authorities, NHS bodies and others on the additional learning needs

system. You can find the Code here: The [Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021](#).

All independent schools in Wales are required to comply with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require a school to make appropriate provision for all learners, including those with ALN. However, independent schools and independent specialist colleges are not required to have regard to the Code and no requirements are imposed on them by it. Nevertheless, guidance and information in the Code may be useful to these providers to inform their understanding of the ALN system and the part they might play in ensuring the best outcomes for learners with ALN.

Estyn Inspection Framework (for schools and PRUs)

Inspectors should ensure that an evaluation of the five inspection areas includes consideration of the outcomes and provision for all learners, including those with ALN.

Inspection area 1: Learning

Standards and progress in learning and skills

Evaluations on the standards of learners who have ALN will need to take account of the information available on their individual needs and abilities. Evaluations will take account of their attainments and achievements in relation to agreed individual learning goals.

Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) categories

PLASC refers to the following categories of SEN:

- General learning difficulties
- Moderate learning difficulties (MLD)
- Severe learning difficulties (SLD)
- Profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD)
- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia
- Dyspraxia
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Autistic spectrum disorders (ASD)[1]
- Physical and medical difficulties
- Hearing impairment (HI)
- Visual impairment (VI)
- Multi-sensory impairment (MSI)
- Speech, language and communication difficulties

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[1] We use the terms autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) and social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) when referring to these categories of ALN.

- Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD)[1]
- Specific learning difficulties (SpLD)

It is not always appropriate to evaluate standards and progress of different groups, especially where there are small numbers of learners within a particular group. It is important to recognise that these learners may be making strong progress in relation to their starting point and their individual needs.

However, where a particular group of learners is making better or worse progress than the overall cohort or other groups of learners with ALN, inspectors may consider it helpful to include a reference to this in the report.

- Are pupils making good progress in their learning from their individual starting points?
- Are learners aware of the progress they are making, and do they actively participate in setting targets for improvement where this is appropriate?
- Do learners achieve the expected objectives contained in their IDPs?
- Are targets for development relevant and sufficiently challenging? Are they linked to IDPs?
- If different groups of learners are making particularly good or poor progress, why is this?
- What is the progress of those learners with relatively weak skills who do not receive support for additional learning needs?

Learner progress rates for those with ALN

When inspecting schools, inspectors should be wary of comparing the performance of learners with ALN with that of their peers who do not have ALN. It is likely that many of them will not achieve as well as their peers in relation to skills or areas of the curriculum. However, they may have made strong progress over time in relation to their starting points. Where learners with ALN make strong progress, this should be recognised in the report.

Examples of this could be where:

- a learner with communication difficulties gains the confidence to communicate with their peers and take part in a school assembly
- a learner with poor co-ordination skills learns to put on their coat at playtime
- a learner with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties gains the necessary qualifications to move on to a college placement or employment
- a learner with autistic spectrum condition (ASC) successfully completes a work experience placement

- How do completion rates of courses for learners and qualifications compare for learners with ALN and to those of other learners?
- How well do learners with ALN apply their skills, knowledge and understanding to new situations including outside of the classroom?
- Do learners' specific difficulties, such as poor concentration or weak communication skills, hinder their progress and access to the whole curriculum?

- Do learners successfully apply the knowledge and skills they develop in 1:1/ small group sessions to the whole-class situation and wider school life?
- Do learners use communication aids/ non-verbal communication effectively to express their needs and opinions and to interact with others?
- Do learners develop their physical/fine motor/gross motor skills suitably?
- Do learners develop the skills that they will need to prepare them for future life?
- Do learners develop appropriate independence and decision-making skills including self-care, personal hygiene, managing money?

Progress in skills

When inspecting progress in skills, it is also important to consider the skills that learners need to help them in their daily lives and to prepare them for the future. This could include, for example, taking off and putting on their shoes, using the toilet independently, learning to read a bus timetable, managing their money, paying bills, asking for help when out in the community, recognising signs and symbols.

When evaluating the progress of more able learners with ALN, inspectors should focus on the progress they have made in relation to their individual starting points but may also consider how this relates to the progress of learners of similar cognitive ability with no ALN.

Progress in relation to starting points

There are different ways in which schools measure a learner's starting point. This may include:

- Observation by the class teacher and other relevant staff
- Formal assessment of a learner's personal and social, literacy and numeracy skills
- Information from a learner's IDP
- Information from specialist reports, for example those of an educational psychologist, speech and language therapist, occupational therapist
- Information from a previous school

Inspectors will consider how well the school uses the information available to it elsewhere in the framework, notably inspection area 3 (3.2: Teaching and assessment) and inspection area 4 (4.1: Personal Development). The focus in this inspection area will be on the information this evidence tells inspectors about the progress learners make in their learning.

There is no agreed expectation as to how much progress a learner should make in relation to their starting point, as this will vary according to the ability and needs of every individual learner. Similarly, many learners with ALN do not make consistent ('linear') progress in their skills development. For example, learners with ASC often have a 'spiky profile' with different levels of skill within an overall area, such as exhibiting strengths in word recognition and spelling yet struggling with their comprehension.

Schools will use a range of approaches to evaluate the progress made by learners

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> with ALN. Inspectors should check carefully that these approaches are robust and that the information they provide is accurate and reliable.

Inspection area 2: Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

2.1 Wellbeing

- Do all learners display positive attitudes towards disability and ALN?
- To what extent do pupils with ALN respond positively to opportunities to take part in a range of physical activities? For example, through lunch clubs, after school clubs.
- Do learners with ALN have positions of responsibility within the school? For example, membership of the school council, peer mentorship.
- Do learners with ALN feel that adults in the school listen to their views?
- Are learners with ALN involved in the process of decision making, where these decisions affect them?

2.2 Attitudes to learning

- How do attendance rates of learners with ALN compare to those of other learners?
- Do learners with poor attendance improve their attendance over time?
- How do exclusion rates of learners with ALN compare to those of other learners?
- Is there a reduction in the exclusion rates of individual learners over time?
- Do learners have opportunities to develop resilience in their learning?
- Do all learners show interest in their work and engage well in tasks?
- Are all learners making progress in taking responsibility for their actions and their work?
- In relation to their identified need do learners, particularly those with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties (SEBD), demonstrate good behaviour in lessons and during breaktimes?

Attendance

When considering the attendance rates of learners with ALN, it is important to consider factors such as illness (associated with conditions) and appointments (medical, therapeutic).

With learners who have emotional or behavioural difficulties, it is more important to consider their improved attendance over time. In many cases, these learners will have a poor attendance history, and may have attended several different schools.

Inspection area 3: Teaching and learning experiences

3.1 The breadth, balance and appropriateness of the school's curriculum

- Do learners have any curriculum needs that are not being provided by the school?

- How well do programmes of study meet the needs of learners with significant learning difficulties?
- Does the school provide additional learning experiences for learners that are appropriate for their needs?
- How well does the school combat the difficulties of gaps in learning and repeated curriculum for learners who have had numerous placement moves?
- How well does the curriculum provide opportunities to develop learners' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in relation to individual starting points?
- To what extent does the curriculum enable learners to develop skills that prepare them well for the next stage of learning and life? For example, independence, self-care or money management.
- Are there sufficient opportunities for learners to develop their skills in practical, real-life situations?
- Do materials and methods of delivery make the curriculum accessible to all learners?
- Does the curriculum provide suitable opportunities for learners with ALN to develop, where appropriate, their Welsh language skills?
- Do learners who access the curriculum using British Sign Language (BSL) or sign-supported English (SSE), braille or large print have support to do so when they need it?

3.2 Teaching and assessment

Teaching

- Are the teaching methods used successful in engaging all learners?
- Do practitioners intervene appropriately in learners' play and independent learning to develop their skills at a suitable level?
- How effective is the use of targeted individual/group sessions for learners?
- To what extent does teaching consider the needs of individual learners?
- Is work suitably challenging and demanding for all learners?
- How effective are the school's early intervention procedures?
- To what extent does teaching enhance learners' knowledge, understanding and skills?
- Do staff have high expectations and provide demanding work to meet the needs of all learners?
- Are support staff used effectively to support learning and behaviour?[2]

> **Support staff**
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> Within schools, learners may have allocated support, which is recorded in their IDP. This is often referred to as 1:1 support. There are important considerations to be made where there is 1:1 support.
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> Unless clearly specified in a learner's IDP, support does not have to be provided by a single member of staff. Generally, it is good practice for the work to be shared, so

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[2] Throughout this guidance the term 'support staff' 'is used to denote staff, other than teachers, who are employed to support learners with additional learning needs. For example, learning support assistants, behaviour support assistants and communication assistants.

that the learner does not become over-dependent on one person. The member of staff may support the learner alongside other learners. The member of staff should not normally sit alongside the learner at all times, as this can prevent independence and make it difficult for a learner to develop relationships with their peers, promoting independence is very important. It is better for a learner to complete a few maths questions independently than to finish all the work with help. Learners should be allowed to make mistakes and correct them on their own, rather than being told every time they make a mistake.

Where inspectors have concerns about the model of support deployed, they should check with the school what arrangements are in place to develop the learner's independence.

- Where applicable, are learners consulted about when it is most appropriate for them to be withdrawn from the work of the class group for individual work?
- Are learners grouped in a way that best helps them to learn, including withdrawal groups and small class groups?
- Do learners attending specialist classes or small groups have a range of experiences, including collaborative work with other learners?
- Do seating arrangements meet the needs of learners with ALN**?**
- Are all staff supporting learners with ALN aware of targets in IDPs?
- How well do support staff understand and use strategies to support individual learners' ALN?

Withdrawal for individual/group sessions

Depending on the context, learners may be withdrawn from class for individual or group sessions. Alternatively, they may receive targeted interventions within the classroom.

In general, schools should try and avoid withdrawing learners too frequently, as this can mean that they miss out on interaction with others. Where specialists, such as therapists or VI/HI/SpLD teachers work with individual learners, it is helpful if this work can take place in the classroom, so that mainstream staff can benefit from the specialist intervention.

Adaptations to the curriculum

Where there is good practice, staff do not simply adapt work that has been prepared for the rest of the class. Instead, they consider all learners from the start, and prepare work and teaching approaches that meet their needs. Appropriate 'adaptations' include producing braille or large print copies for learners with visual impairment, making use of learners' special interests to engage them in learning or providing learners with ASC with regular movement breaks to help reduce the anxiety associated with a busy classroom, refocus and become calm.

Person-centred practice (PCP) approaches

With the introduction of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal

(Wales) Act 2018, person-centred practice (PCP) approaches for planning/reviews should be commonplace. Further guidance can be found here: Person-centred reviews toolkit: A guide for early years, schools and colleges in Wales.

Assessment

- Do staff provide feedback in ways that are meaningful to learners? Does this feedback meet their individual needs?
- To what extent are learners engaged in meaningful activities that demonstrate an understanding of their own performance and the steps they need to take to improve?
- Does the school use a range of appropriate additional assessment tools and procedures for identifying the needs of learners?
- Does the school have appropriate systems in place for tracking the progress of learners with ALN?
- Does the school use assessment data well to monitor the progress of learners with ALN and plan the curriculum and/or support needs of learners in a timely manner?
- How effective are annual reports to parents and carers? Are they clear and personal and based on a sound understanding of the learner? Do they provide a good enough account of the progress made by individuals?
- Do reports to parents and carers link well enough to targets contained in IDPs?

Written feedback

Not all learners will be able to access written feedback. Inspectors should consider whether written feedback helps learners to understand what they need to do to improve their work, and whether feedback does actually lead to improvement. If this is not the case, it may be more effective to provide verbal feedback.

Inspection area 4: Care, support and guidance

4.1 Personal development (including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the provision of learning support)

Identifying and supporting needs

- Does the school have robust systems in place for identifying the ALN of individual learners when they start at the school?
- To what extent do learners with ALN leave the roll of school before the completion of either statutory education or their course? What reasons are provided for this and how is this information shared with governors or the local authority?
- Are there close links and good joint planning between any resource provision and mainstream provision?
- Is learning support appropriate? Does the school have a good enough understanding of the effectiveness of support?

- How effective is the school in making appropriate provision for learners with emotional and social needs?
- Where applicable, are special examination arrangements well planned, and discussed and agreed with learners?
- Where applicable and appropriate, are there well-developed plans for transition back to mainstream provision?

Identifying ALN

Schools will use a range of evidence to support identification of ALN. This evidence can come from the child, parents and carers, education staff or other services involved with the child, for example a health visitor. Children may have an identified disability, however, those who do not have an identified disability will have their progress observed and assessed.

Evidence collected may include:

- standardised screening or assessment tools and frameworks
- observational data
- the quality of their work
- developmental checklists
- scaling questionnaires
- assessment through intervention
- assessments from other agencies, such as health bodies
- behaviour and social emotional questionnaires and standardised tests
- other forms of personalised assessment, especially where sensory impairments render standardised screening and assessment tools and frameworks inappropriate

Slow progress and low attainment no do not necessarily mean that a child or young person has ALN. Equally, a child who achieves in line with chronological age may have ALN**.**

Where progress continues to be less than expected and the application of differentiated teaching or standard targeted interventions have failed to address the attainment gap between the child or young person and their peers, this would usually indicate that the child or young person may have ALN.

Once it has been agreed that a child has ALN then the appropriate additional learning provision (ALP) should be agreed based on evidence, for example from an educational psychologist, medical professional or education staff.

For more information on schools' duties around the process of identifying ALN and implementing the most appropriate ALP, please see [The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021](#).

External support services

- Is the school working well in partnership with others, for example health services or social services, to meet learners' needs?

- Does the school liaise well with other agencies and help learners with ALN plan their future pathways?
- Does the school have good arrangements in place to ensure ALN learners' seamless transition from one phase of education to another (including transition into and out of the school)?
- Is there effective liaison with the local authority to ensure that additional support meets learners' needs?
- Is there evidence that the school tracks the progress made of learners referred to outside agencies and PRUs for education other than at school?
- How committed is the school to the local authority's 'managed moves' arrangements?
- Where applicable, do learners access Welsh-speaking specialist support staff, teachers or educational psychologists, as well as provision for specific needs such as speech and language therapists?
- Does the school engage effectively with partners, including parents and carers and learners' previous schools, to identify the needs of learners and make appropriate provision?
- Do schools make learners and families aware of professional support and specialist services such as counselling services, Careers Wales and mental health services?
- How well does advice and guidance to learners on their next stage of learning take into account their individual strengths and needs?

Alternative and augmentative communication (AAC)

The term AAC refers to the different methods that can be used by people with significant communication issues to support or replace spoken communication. Special schools generally make extensive use of AAC. However, learners with complex communication needs who attend mainstream provision may also need to use AAC methods.

Methods include:

- gestures
- signing
- symbols
- communication boards
- objects of reference
- use of technology e.g. Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs), eye-gaze technology

It should be noted that we do not recommend or endorse any particular communication method.

Total communication

Schools may adopt a 'Total Communication' approach, whereby learners will be taught to communicate using a combination of methods which support and

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reinforce each other. For example, a learner may use symbols and signing, as well as gesture and basic speech.

Welsh language provision

Providers will be required to consider whether a child or young person needs ALP in Welsh; this duty will be an ongoing one, rather than a one-off decision. If they do, this must be documented in the IDP and 'all reasonable steps' must be taken to secure the provision in Welsh. A mechanism is included in the Act to remove by regulations the 'all reasonable steps' test, so that the duties to provide ALP through the medium of Welsh become absolute over time.

Managed moves

A managed move is a carefully planned transfer of a learner from one school into another.

It enables a child or young person to move on to a new placement or programme in a way which is acceptable to all appropriate parties, especially the learner. The process is designed to help the learner move forward and make a fresh start.

Evidence suggests that for a managed move to be successful, the full engagement of the learner, parents and carers and the schools need to be fully considered and transport issues need to be addressed.

More information can be found in the Welsh Government circular 096/2011: [Effective managed moves. A fresh start at school for children and young people.](#)

and in our thematic study: [Effective use of managed moves by local authorities and schools (March 2018)](#)

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

- Are acts of collective worship accessible for all learners?
- To what extent does the school make meaningful and worthwhile opportunities for learners with ALN to develop their knowledge and understanding in making suitable lifestyle choices in relation to healthy eating and drinking, substance misuse, online safety and sex and relationships?
- To what extent is the school's personal and social education programme tailored to the needs of learners with ALN?
- Are all learners given enough encouragement and opportunities to take responsibility for themselves and others, show initiative and develop an understanding of living in a community?
- To what extent does the school allow and encourage learners with ALN to make decisions that affect them? Do they play an active role as class or student representative? Are they members of the school councils or student unions? Are their views and experiences listened to and acted upon?
- How well does the school ensure there are opportunities for learners with additional needs to develop spiritually and culturally? For example through a rich, well-tailored provision for the arts, including music, art and design.

- Does the school ensure that school productions and performances, theatre, dance and sport include appropriate opportunities to enable those with ALN including physical needs, to participate?

Planning for transition

There is a clear link between poor transition and poor outcomes for children. Unsuccessful transition may lead to poor attendance and disengagement from education. Learners will go through several periods of transition throughout their school life, and especially for those with ALN, these should be planned carefully.

Learners should be involved in discussions and planning for transition, where possible. Research has shown that using a person-centred approach to transition helps improve the experience of children and their families. Any additional support identified for transition can be documented in the IDP to enable that action is taken at the appropriate time. Transition planning combined with IDP reviews can be an efficient and effective way of using resources.

For more information about how to support learners during specific periods of transition, such as transition into a learner's first education setting, or transition into a new setting, please see the [The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021](#).

Inspectors will also consider how well the school manages transitions of learners with ALN within the school setting or school day, for example where learners attend a specialist class within the mainstream school.

4.2 Safeguarding

- Do the school's safeguarding policies and procedures take account of the increased vulnerability of learners with ALN and ensure that arrangements for these learners are appropriate?
- Are staff appropriately trained, where appropriate in restrictive physical intervention?
- Does the school have a clear policy around the use of restrictive physical intervention? Does this meet the expectations in national guidance such as Welsh Government circular 272/2021: ['Keeping Learners Safe – The role of local authorities, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools under the education act 2002'](#) and ['Safe and effective intervention: use of reasonable force and searching for weapons'](#), Welsh Government guidance document 097/2013?
- Does the school have appropriate systems to record incidents, including reporting to relevant bodies? Do staff follow these procedures robustly?
- Are medical protocols for individual disabled learners up to date and have staff received appropriate training?
- To what extend is the school's approach to anti-bullying effective, particularly in relation to learners with ALN?

Inspection area 5: Leadership

5.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Whole school approach to ALN

- Does the school have a clear ethos of inclusion and diversity?
- Do all staff, governors, parents and carers and learners share this ethos?
- Do senior managers place an appropriate strategic focus on provision and outcomes for learners with ALN?
- How effective is the school in working with partners to improve the knowledge and understanding of staff to make suitable adjustments to curriculum and/or support?

Role of the ALNCo

- Are the ALNCo role and responsibilities clearly defined?
- Is the ALNCo aware of local and national guidance on identification and assessment of learners with ALN and their role in its implementation?
- Is there enough non-teaching time for the ALNCo to fulfil their role?
- Is the ALNCo appropriately qualified and experienced? In this context, inspectors should remember that the experience and areas of expertise of staff are as important as any specific qualifications in ALN.
- How well do designated staff, including support staff, understand and fulfil their roles effectively?
- Does the school have enough staff with the right skills to support learners effectively to ensure progression and continuity in learning?

Role of the ALNCo

Under the new legislation all mainstream maintained schools and FEIs in Wales must designate a person who will have responsibility for coordinating provision for learners with ALN. That person will be known as an additional learning needs coordinator, or ALNCo. The ALNCo should be a teacher or have prior experience as a SENCo.

Settings should consider the skill set and experience of the individual to ensure they can deliver the functions prescribed in law. ALNCos should be highly qualified and should have expertise in person centred practice and dealing with a broad spectrum of ALN. ALNCos should actively undertake training to support their continuing professional development. The designation of an ALNCo does not remove the responsibilities of the wider workforce; all staff who work with children and young people with ALN have a responsibility for ensuring that their learners' needs are identified and met.

The ALNCo is the individual who, at a strategic level, ensures the needs of all learners with ALN within the education setting are met. The role is a strategic one within the education setting and should, therefore, either form part of the senior leadership team or have a clear line of communication to the senior leadership team.

Role of the Early Years Additional Needs Lead Officer (EYALNLO)

Local authorities have a significant role in supporting Early Years providers (please see Chapters 10 and 11 of the Code for further information), including non-maintained settings, in meeting the requirements of the ALN code. Each local authority now needs to have an Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer (EYALNLO) to fulfil its obligations under the act.

The local authority EYALNLO will have an important part to play in improving the early identification of needs; establishing referral routes and raising awareness among multi-agency partners; ensuring better planning for future provision; and helping ensure the early years workforce has the appropriate skills, mechanisms and tools to support young children with ALN. **Inspectors should note that it is no longer an expectation that non-maintained nursery settings should have their own additional learning needs coordinator (ALNCO).**

For further guidance on the role of the ALNCo and EYALNLO, please see: The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021.

Role of the governors

- To what extent is the designated governor a "champion" for learners with ALN?
- How effective is the designated governor in holding the senior leadership team to account for the standards and provision for learners with ALN?

Management of resources

- Does the school allocate sufficient resources to meet the needs of learners with ALN?
- Are resources matched well to the needs of learners with ALN?
- Are specialist resources, for example information and communication technology (ICT) equipment, radio aids and sound fields systems, used well to enable learners with ALN to access the curriculum fully?
- Does the school have a history of appropriately funding provision for learners with ALN?
- Is the school able to demonstrate the impact or value of its spending decisions in relation to ALN?
- Is the school physically adapted to meet learners' needs appropriately?
- Are there appropriate changing facilities for learners with disabilities?

Engagement with parents and carers

- Does the school have strong links with parents and carers of learners with ALN that help learning to be continued at home?
- How effective is the school in establishing productive relationships with parents and carers of learners with ALN? Do parents and carers feel well supported by the school?
- Are parents and carers helped to understand procedures, including statutory assessment procedures, and do they have access to records and reports relating to their children?

- Does the school ensure that parents and carers have access to a range of current information on their children's needs or difficulties?

5.2 Self-evaluation processes and improvement planning

- How well do managers, at all levels, have an understanding about what needs to be done to improve outcomes and progress for learners with ALN?
- Do plans include a sufficient focus on timescale and cost of making suitable adjustments to the physical environment?
- How does the school know if the ALNCo is effective in discharging their duties?
- To what extent are local authority specialist classes involved in having their work quality assured?
- Does the school have a strong record in improving outcomes and provision for learners with ALN? How well do leaders ensure that targets for learners with ALN are suitably challenging, so that these learners reach the highest standards that they are capable of achieving?
- To what extent does the ALNCo share their knowledge with staff and what impact has this had?
- How does the school include the views of learners with ALN and of their parents and carers in its self-evaluation processes?

5.3 Professional learning

- How has the school developed the knowledge and understanding of all staff in relation to learners with ALN?
- To what extent does the school use the expertise and knowledge of specialist staff to improve provision and outcomes for learners?
- Does the school have a strong history in supporting the professional development of specialist support staff?
- Have staff been appropriately trained to understand the ALN reform?

Appendix 1: Overview of ALN legislation

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 replaced the previous legislation around ALN and the assessment of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) in post-16 education and training.

Objectives of the Act

1. • To provide a unified piece of legislation to support children and young people aged 0-25 with additional learning needs in providers and futher education institutions;

2. • To promote an integrated, collaborative process of assessment, planning and monitoring which facilitates early, timely and effective interventions; and

3. • To have a fair and transparent system for providing information and advice and for resolving concerns and appeals.

The objectives are supported by the following 11 aims:

1. **The introduction of the term 'additional learning needs (ALN)'**

   The Act replaced the terms 'special educational needs (SEN)' and 'learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD)' with the term 'additional learning needs (ALN)'.

2. **A 0 to 25 age range**

   There is a single legislative system relating to the support given to children and young people aged between 0 to 25 years who have ALN.

3. **A unified plan**

   The Act created a single statutory plan (the IDP) to replace the previous variety of statutory and non-statutory SEN or LDD plans for learners in schools and further education.

4. **Increased participation of children and young people**

   The Act required that learners' views should always be considered as part of the planning process, along with those of their parents and carers. It is imperative that children and young people see the planning process as something which is done with them rather than to them.

5. **High aspirations and improved outcomes**

   The emphasis of IDPs will be on making provision that delivers tangible outcomes that contribute in a meaningful way to the child or young person's achievement of their full potential.

6. **A simpler and less adversarial system**

   The process of producing and revising an IDP should be much simpler than was

previously the case with statements of SEN.

7. Increased collaboration

The new system encourages improved collaboration and information sharing between agencies, which are essential to ensuring that needs are identified early, and the right support is put in place to enable children and young people to achieve positive outcomes.

8. Avoiding disagreements and earlier disagreement resolution

The new system focuses on ensuring that where disagreements occur about an IDP or the provision it contains, the matter is considered and resolved at the most local level possible.

9. Clear and consistent rights of appeal

Where disagreements about the contents of an IDP cannot be resolved at the local level, the Act ensures that children and young people entitled to an IDP (and their parents and carers in the case of those that are under 16 years) have a right of appeal to a tribunal.

10. The ALN Code

The ALN Code provides a set of clear, legally enforceable parameters within which local authorities and those other organisations responsible for the delivery of services for children and young people with ALN, must act.

11. A bilingual system

The Act requires that services must consider whether a child or young person needs additional learning provision in Welsh. If they do, this must be documented in the IDP and 'all reasonable steps' must be taken to secure the provision in Welsh.

Appendix 2: Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

IDPs are statutory plans for learners with ALN which contain a description of the person's ALN, a description of the alternative learning provision (ALP) which the learner's learning difficulty or disability calls for and anything else required of authorised by or under Part 2 of the ALN Act. During the phased implementation period of the new ALN act, some learners may still have a statement of special educational needs (SEN).

Those children who are looked after will have slightly different plans which form part of their personal education plan (PEP).

IDPs will also replace statements of SEN and individual education plans (IEPs) for learners currently supported through Early Years Action or Early Years Action Plus. The application of the tests to establish whether a child under the compulsory age has ALN is slightly different to those who are of compulsory school age. More information about non-maintained settings is in Appendix 6.

Inspectors should consider the following questions when evaluating these plans:
- Does the plan contain a profile of the young person?
- Does the plan have a timeline of key events for the young person?
- Does the plan include details of the learner's additional learning needs?
- Does the plan include specific details of the provision that is needed to support the child?
- Does the plan clearly identify strategies that staff are to use?
- How does the school know if staff are consistent in using the identified strategies?
- Does the plan include targets that are measurable and are appropriate to the identified difficulty?
- Are targets relevant and sufficiently challenging?
- Does the plan have a start and review date?
- Does the plan include the views of the parents and carers and the learner?
- Is there clear evidence of progress that the child is making in relation to the targets for improvement?
- Does the plan include recent assessment and achievement information?
- Are learners involved in setting their targets and reviewing their progress?
- Are parents and carers involved in setting and reviewing targets and progress?
- Are all staff working with learners with ALN aware of the targets and monitoring procedures for individuals?
- Was the plan created through a process of person-centred practice?
- Does the plan show who is responsible for each objective?
- Does the plan have details to support and plan future transitions?
- Does the plan contain information about travel to school? (Where required)

Inspectors should ensure that the provider is aware of the duties on maintained schools and local authorities in relation to children at maintained schools in Wales.

For further detail on the required content of an IDP please see The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021.

Appendix 3: Specialist provision in mainstream schools

Category 1: Local authority funded specialist classes

These classes are often referred to as learning support classes/centres, enhanced teaching facilities or learning resource bases. They are funded by the local authority and based in mainstream schools. The LA, in liaison with the school, places learners at these classes, usually through a panel system. Learners who attend the class may live outside the school catchment area. The learners are usually on the roll of the school.

LA specialist classes are provided for children who have needs that cannot ordinarily be met in a mainstream class. Learners who attend an LA specialist class will usually have a special educational need, for example autism, speech communication and language difficulties, severe learning difficulties, visual or hearing impairments, or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Learners will benefit from higher staffing levels than in mainstream and staff will usually have specialist qualifications, knowledge or experience in working with the identified needs that learners have. Depending on their need, some learners may be taught almost exclusively in the specialist class and others may benefit from being taught alongside mainstream peers.

Inspection of local authority funded specialist classes

If one or more learners who attend a specialist class are on the roll of the school, we will inspect the provision as part of the mainstream school. The prompts provided against the five inspection areas are equally applicable to local authority specialist classes. In addition, inspectors should consider the following questions:

- How much do learners in the specialist class benefit from learning experiences across the whole school?
- How appropriate is the curriculum on offer within the specialist class to meet the needs of all the learners?
- How well is the expertise in the specialist class used to improve outcomes for learners with ALN across the school?

Category 2: Additional teaching resource that is part of a special school but based on the mainstream school premises. Learners have dual registration

You should inspect the outcomes achieved by learners in the additional resource. In writing, you should continue to report on whole school performance, including these learners. However, where possible, you should also report briefly on the progress made by these learners so that their progress can be considered in the special school inspection. However, you should not evaluate the educational provision or leadership, unless the head of the mainstream school employs and manages the teachers in the additional teaching resource. Inspection of provision and leadership will be undertaken as part of the inspection of the special school.

Category 3: Additional teaching resource that is part of a special school but based on the mainstream school premises. Learners do not have dual registration – they are on the roll of the special school. Staff are employed by the special school

You should not inspect this sort of provision as part of the mainstream school. The inspection of this provision will be undertaken as part of the inspection of the special school. You may consider whether the presence of the additional teaching resource has any positive impact within the mainstream school, as you would for any other partnerships.

Category 4: Additional teaching resource, based on a mainstream school premises, but registered as a PRU

You should not inspect this PRU as part of the school inspection, as a separate inspection will be undertaken. You may consider whether the presence of the additional teaching resource has any positive impact within the mainstream school, as you would for any other partnerships. We may also inspect the Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) provision during the inspection of the local authority. However, if some learners have dual registration, the principles apply as in category 2 above.

Category 5: Any other additional teaching resource which is on the school premises but does not fit categories 1-4

You should not inspect this provision. Please notify the Inspection Coordinator on 02920 446446 of the existence of resource provision that falls into category 5. This provision may have the following features:

- Learners take part in alternative curriculum arrangements that are not funded by the school.
- The local authority directly funds and manages the provision.
- The local authority funds external schools to run the provision.

Appendix 4: Additional questions to ask when inspecting provision for learners with challenging behaviour

The school may have 'inclusion', 'nurture' or 'learning support' provision to support learners who disrupt lessons. Inspectors should consider the following questions when evaluating this learning and provision:

- Is there a clear pathway of referral to access this provision and is this system used appropriately?
- How well do the school's policies identify the arrangements for accessing the provision?
- How well do senior leaders analyse the effectiveness of the school's strategies – are they aware of patterns of repeated removal or frequent removal from one teacher or subject?
- Do senior leaders use the analysis of patterns to decide when learners or teachers need additional support?
- How well is further action taken, such as use of support assistants, informing parents and carers, planned sanctions? (Look at when, why, how often and what.)
- What is the role of staff who support learners in the provision? How well trained are they to fulfil this role? How well supported are they by leaders in the school?
- How effective is teaching and learning in the 'inclusion' provision?
- Do the support and interventions match the learners' needs?
- Does learners' behaviour improve during their time in the provision – how is this evidenced?
- Is improved behaviour maintained on return to their usual classes?

Appendix 5: The previous SEN system

Although these stages and terms are not reflected in current legislation, some of these may still be used during the transition period.

Early Years Action

Previously, when an early education practitioner who worked day-to-day with the child, or the SENCO, identified a child with SEN, they devised interventions that were additional to or different from those provided as part of the setting's usual curriculum offer and strategies.

Early Years Action Plus

Early Years Action Plus was characterised by the involvement of external support services who could help early education schools with advice on new IEPs and targets, provide more specialist assessments, give advice on the use of new or specialist strategies or materials, and in some cases provide support for activities.

School Action

Previously, when a class teacher or the SENCO identified a child with SEN the class teacher provided interventions that were additional to or different from those provided as part of the school's usual differentiated curriculum offer and strategies.

School Action Plus

Under previous legislation a request for help from external services was likely to follow a decision taken by the SENCO and colleagues, in consultation with parents and carers, at a meeting to review the child's IEP. Schools should have always consulted specialists when they took action on behalf of a child through School Action Plus.

School request for a statutory assessment

Where a request for a statutory assessment is made by a school to an LA, the child will have demonstrated significant cause for concern. The LA will seek evidence from the school that any strategy or programme implemented for the child in question has been continued for a reasonable period without success and that alternatives have been tried, or the reasons why this has not occurred.

Statement of special educational needs

Once all the advice requested for the statutory assessment has been received, the LA must decide whether to draw up a statement. The LA may decide that the degree of the child's learning difficulty and the nature of the provision necessary to meet the child's SEN is such as to require the LA to determine the child's special educational provision through a statement.

Note in lieu

Previously, within two weeks of completing the statutory assessment the LEA had to decide whether they will make a statement. The LA may consider issuing a note in lieu of a statement. It may be appropriate for the format of a note in lieu to follow broadly the statutory format of the statement, although there is a difference in the legal status of the two documents.

Most common individual plans under the previous system	
Statement of Special Educational Needs	Statements of SEN were issued to learners with the most complex needs. The statement made it a legal requirement that the learner should receive the provision identified.
Individual Education Plan (IEP)	A document which supported teachers to plan for the progress of learners with SEN. They generally set out personal targets, the support provided to help the learner meet the targets, and how the school will review learners' progress against targets.
Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP)	This plan was used for learners who had difficulty in managing their behaviour.
Individual Healthcare Plan (IHPs)	IHPs were previously essential where healthcare needs are complex, fluctuating, long term or where there is a high risk that an emergency intervention will be needed. For learners with SEN, this plan was attached to their Statement of SEN, IEP or individual learning plan.
Pastoral Support Plan (PSP)	A document that stated the support that needed to be provided to prevent a learner from being excluded or to prevent criminal activity.
Positive Handling Plan (PHP)	This plan was used for learners who had difficulty in managing their behaviour and sets out the situations which may provoke certain behaviours, preventative strategies and the de-escalation strategies that are most effective.

Types of individual plan used under ALN Act 2018	
Individual Development Plan (IDP)	An IDP is a statutory plan maintained by a school, FEI or local authority that sets out a description of a child or young person's ALN, the additional learning provision (ALP) called for by their learning difficulty or disability, and other associated information. Unlike a statement of SEN, IDPs will be provided to all children and young people with ALN irrespective of the severity or complexity of their needs. The statutory status of the IDP will be the same irrespective of the child or young person's needs, with the same rights of appeal to the Education Tribunal for Wales for anyone with an IDP. The IDP is intended to be a flexible document that will vary in length and complexity depending on the different needs of learners and the way in which an individual learner's needs develop and change over time.
Personal Education Plan (PEP)	A statutory document that sets out the learning needs of children who are looked after. The IDP will be incorporated in the PEP that is maintained by the local authority that looks after the child.

Appendix 6: ALN in Non-maintained settings

Establishing whether a child under compulsory school age has ALN.

The application of the tests to establish whether a child under the compulsory age has ALN is slightly different to those who are of compulsory school age.

The first test is still whether the child has a learning difficulty or disability, but the meaning of that is slightly different. It is whether the child, when of compulsory school age, is, or would be if no ALP were made, likely to have

i.   a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or

ii.   a disability (within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010) which prevents or hinders the child from making use of facilities for education or training of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream maintained schools.

The second test is also the same as that for older children and young people, namely whether the learning difficulty or disability calls for ALP. However, for children aged under three, ALP means educational provision of any kind. For those aged 3 and over, ALP has the same meaning as for children of compulsory school age and young people (as set out above). The definition of ALP for children aged under three is slightly different to reflect the fact that these children are not at an age where maintained education is routinely available.

ALP for those aged under three can take many forms; for instance, group work or individual support - where it is educational provision of any kind. This might include, for example, educational provision in Flying Start or specialist health, physical, communication or sensory support. This can take place in an education setting or elsewhere.

ALN and the guidance handbook for inspecting care and education in regulated non-school settings eligible for funding for part-time education.

Inspectors need to report on the effectiveness of the setting's additional learning needs provision in almost all of the six themes, however this will predominantly be as part of Theme 3 'Care and development'.

It is the responsibility of the Estyn and CIW inspectors to gather evidence to support the evaluation on the effectiveness of the setting's ALN provision for all children between 0 and 12 who may attend the setting. Inspectors should consider supporting evidence from a range of sources before reaching a judgement on this.

In section 2.1 **'How well do children acquire skills and make appropriate progress in their learning?'**, inspectors should evaluate the effectiveness of the setting's ALN provision by considering:

- are children making good progress in their learning from their individual starting points?

In section **3.3 'How well do practitioners promote children's development and meet their individual needs?'**, inspectors should consider:

- the extent to which the setting offers children with ALN full access to all areas of learning
- how well the setting identifies, assesses and responds to children's individual needs
- how well the setting integrates, supports and provides for children with ALN, so that they make good progress in line with their stage of development
- the extent to which practitioners understand and respond to meeting individual needs
- how effectively the setting conducts regular person-centred reviews of children's progress that include parents and carers and all relevant multi-agencies
- the use of and contribution from specialist services such as the Early Years ALN lead officer, health, psychological, portage and social services.

In section **4.1 'How well do practitioners plan learning experiences that meet the needs of children?'**, inspectors should consider:

- how well practitioners plan learning and play experiences to meet the needs of all children, including those with ALN.

In section **4.2 'How well do practitioners teach and assess children?'**, inspectors should consider:

- the extent to which practitioners have up-to-date knowledge of child development and the impact of additional learning needs on development
- have high expectations of all children, including children with additional learning needs

In section **5.2 'How well do leaders ensure the suitability and use of the premises?'**, inspectors should consider:

- the extent to which all children with ALN have equal access to the setting's facilities, resources and activities.
- there is sufficient space and facilities to meet the needs of children with ALN.

In section **6.3 'How effective is the management of staff and resources'**, inspectors should evaluate the effectiveness of the setting's ALN provision by ensuring:

- that there are sufficient practitioners who have appropriate qualifications and experience of working with young children with ALN and that these are deployed appropriately.

In section **6.4 'How effective are partnerships?'**, inspectors should consider:

- How clear the setting is about its role and responsibilities to establish trust and clear communication between partners.
- How well the setting works with parents and carers, EYALNLO and other partners to support children with ALN.

Questions for the leaders in non-maintained settings

- How aware is the setting of the mandatory ALN code and how it impacts them?
- How aware is the setting that their local authority has a designated Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer (EYALNLO) and are they aware of how the officer's role impacts on them?
- How aware is the setting of what information the LA has shared with parents and carers regarding ALN, the LA EYALNLO and the ALN system?
- Has the setting received information or training from the LA that enables them to help the local authority in the exercise of its ALN functions in relation to a child that has ALN?
- Has the training made them aware of the principles underpinning the ALN system and how this impacts on them (rights-based approach; early identification, intervention and integration; collaboration and integration; inclusive education; a bilingual system)?
- Has the setting received information or training from the LA that enables them to understand the definition of ALN and to identify whether a child under compulsory school age has ALN? (how confident are they in doing so?)
- What training and support has the setting received to support the local authority in meeting the requirements of an IDP?
- What training and support has the setting received to support the local authority to ensure that relevant transition information is included in the IDP when a child leaves the setting?
- Has the setting received information or training from the LA that enables them to be aware of the wide range of learning difficulties or disabilities covered by the code?
- Has the local authority ensured independent advocacy services are known to the setting and parents and carers in order avoid and resolve any disagreements regarding ALN support or ALP at the earliest opportunity?
- Is the setting aware that services including non-maintained settings, will be required to consider whether a child or young person needs ALP in Welsh?

Appendix 7: Common abbreviations

AAC	Alternative and Augmentative Communication
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit and hyperactivity Disorder
ALN	Additional Learning Needs
ALNCo	Additional Learning Needs Coordinator
ALP	Additional learning provision
ASC	Autism Spectrum Condition
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BESD	Behavioural, emotional and/or Social difficulties
BSL	British Sign Language
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CLA	Child Looked After
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DELCO	Designated education clinical lead officer
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
EOTAS	Education other than at school
EP	Educational Psychologist
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
EYALNLO	Early Years Additional Learning Needs Coordinator
FE	Further Education
FEI	Further Education Institution
FF	Families First
HI	Hearing Impairment
IBP	Individual Behaviour Plan
IDP	Individual Development Plan
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IHP	Individual Healthcare Plan
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer
ISPI	Independent special post-16 institution
LA	Local authority
LAC	Looked after child
LDD	Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities
LHB	Local Health Board
LSA	Learning support assistant
MAP	Multi Agency Plan(ning)
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulties
MSI	Multi-Sensory Impairment
OT	Occupational Therapy

PCP	Person Centred Plan(ning)
PECS	Picture Exchange Communication System ®
PEP	Personal Education Plan
PHP	Positive Handling Plan
PMLD	Profound and multiple learning difficulties
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PSP	Pastoral support plan
SA	School Action
SA+	School Action Plus
SEAL	Social and emotional aspects of learning
SEBD	Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
SEMH	Social, emotional and mental health
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SI	Sensory impairment
SLCD	Speech, language and communication difficulties
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulties
SLT	Speech and Language Therapist
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
SSE	Sign Supported English
TA	Teaching Assistant
TAF	Team around the Family
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
VI	Visual impairment
VOCA	Voice Output Communication Aids