



One minute guide

Area SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) thematic visits

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What are Area SEND thematic visits?

In January 2023, [OfSTED](#) and the [Care Quality Commission](#) (CQC) adopted a new inspection framework for the inspection of local area arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs (SEND). The framework replaces the previous SEND inspection framework. Leeds was inspected under this framework in 2016; please see the published [letter](#).

The 2023 SEND inspection framework includes full area SEND inspections—please see the [one minute guide](#) for more information on how these inspections work, and their outcomes—as well as annual conversations with Ofsted focused on services and support for SEND, and thematic visits.

Ofsted and the CQC will carry out a series of thematic visits each academic year to a small number of areas to investigate a particular aspect of the SEND system in depth, looking at the ways in which local area partners work together to deliver that aspect. As each theme will only involve a small number of local areas, there may be several themes where Leeds prepares for a potential visit that we do not receive; these preparations will inform our own practice development.

Local areas which are subject to a thematic visit will not receive a judgement about their services or support under the selected theme, and there will be no published letter setting out the strengths and areas for development for each area visited under the theme. The outcome of the thematic visits will be a national report summarising findings and themes across all local areas visited; the report will not attribute findings to individual areas unless those areas agree to be identified. The purpose of the report is to share learning to promote improvement in the sector.

What is the focus of the 2022/2023 thematic visits?

The 2022/ 2023 thematic visits are focused on alternative provision (AP). The framework for alternative provision thematic visits is available [here](#).

Alternative Provision is defined in the [Department for Education \(DfE\) Alternative Provision Guidance](#) as: *'education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour.'*

According to the framework, the purpose of the alternative provision visits are to:

- Explore the extent to which AP is meeting the health, care and/ or education needs of children and young people;
- Better understand the purposes for which AP is used;
- Identify the enablers and barriers to local area partners working together to commission and oversee AP placements; and
- Highlight good practice in commissioning and oversight arrangements for AP.

The visits focus on children and young people aged between 5 and 18 who are in AP or have been in AP within the last six months who live in the area or are the responsibility of the area (for those young children who are educated out of area).

What does alternative provision look like in Leeds?

In Leeds, our Alternative Provision includes:

The Medical Needs Teaching Service (MNTS) –

- Community - for those children with active CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) involvement who are identified as being too unwell to attend school
- Inpatient – for those children in hospital.

Pupil Tuition Team – for those pupils temporarily unable to attend school due to medical or other reasons, but who do not currently have CAMHS involvement or are not appropriate to receive MNTS intervention.

SEND Tuition – for pupils newly arrived to the city with complex needs, awaiting a place with an [Education Health and Care Plan \(EHCP\)](#) or temporarily unable to access their offer.

Citywide Exceptional AP places – the local authority has a duty to provide education for pupils permanently excluded from schools from the 6th day of exclusion. These AP places, and other exceptional cases requiring AP for a short period of time, are managed by our Area Inclusion Partnerships (AIPs). AIPs are partnerships of schools in five areas across Leeds. They hold budgets to provide 6th day cover, and support inclusion and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs linked to challenging or disruptive behaviours across the schools in that area.

Locally delivered AP places – there is some funding devolved to the local AIPs to provide outreach, step out, and short term places.

Places commissioned directly by schools – schools can commission AP places directly, to respond to their own local needs. Schools remain responsible for considering the appropriateness of the placement and outcomes for all learners. The local authority is notified of these commissions through the School AP Census.

Places commissioned by the local authority in non-maintained settings - this includes provision commissioned and fully funded by the Local Authority outside the maintained sector. Nearly all pupils in this category have an EHCP or are looked after.

How are the visits carried out?

Thematic visits take place over three weeks, with inspectors off-site for the first two.

During **week one**: set-up discussions take place between the local authority and partners; inspectors share links to online surveys for local areas to share with children, young people, parents/ carers and AP providers; the local area share information to support the visit, including lists of children and young people in AP; and from this information, inspectors select individual children and young people for tracking, and providers to visit.

During **week two**: local area partners provide further information for individual tracking meetings; inspectors work with local leaders to agree a timetable and the local area arranges visits and meetings; and inspectors begin off-site evidence gathering.

During **week three**: inspectors conduct on-site evidence gathering through visits and meetings, and discuss their observations with local area leaders.

Further information

The framework and handbook outlining how the visits are carried out are available [here](#). For questions about visit preparations in Leeds, please contact SEnDBestPractice@leeds.gov.uk.