ALMA EDUCATION

Student Induction Policy

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Statement of Intent

A well-planned induction is the foundation of a successful placement. This policy sets out how Alma introduces itself to each new learner: what information is gathered before the first session, what is shared with the learner and their family, and how the first sessions are planned.

It applies to every learner entering Alma's provision, regardless of age, setting or commissioning arrangement.

Legislation and Statutory Guidance
Children and Families Act 2014
SEND Code of Practice 0 to 25 Years (Jan 2015)
Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)
Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)
Equality Act 2010
UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018
Non-School AP Voluntary National Standards (Aug 2025)

1. Legal Framework and Related Policies

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the legislation and guidance listed in the table above.

This policy operates in conjunction with the following Alma policies:

- Admissions Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Data Protection and Privacy Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

2. Aims

The induction process aims to:

- Give each learner a safe, positive and pressure-free introduction to Alma.
- Build an honest and trusting relationship between the learner, their family and their learning mentor from the outset.
- Gather the information needed to plan provision that is genuinely matched to the learner's needs, strengths and starting points.

- Complete a baseline assessment in English, mathematics and wellbeing within the first two weeks of provision.
- Develop and share an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) within the first two weeks.
- Ensure that all safeguarding, consent and health and safety requirements are completed before or at the first session.
- Give families and commissioning bodies a clear and transparent account of how induction is managed.

3. Induction Stages

Induction at Alma follows seven stages. The order and pace of these stages is adapted to each learner's needs. Some stages will take longer than others. Where a learner presents with high anxiety or complex needs, the Director of Education will discuss the appropriate pace with the family and, where relevant, the commissioning body.

Stage 1: Pre-Placement

Before any session is agreed, the Director of Education:

- Reviews the referral and any accompanying documentation, including the EHC plan, previous education history, medical information and any known risk factors.
- Confirms that Alma's provision is appropriate for the learner's needs.
- Risk assesses the proposed session location and confirms it is approved for use.
- Verifies that all required safeguarding checks for the assigned learning mentor are in place and recorded on the Single Central Record.
- Agrees the placement with the commissioning body and family and confirms the session format, frequency and start date.

Stage 2: First Contact with Family

Before the first session, the Director of Education contacts the learner's parent or carer by phone or video call. This call is introductory and informal, and covers:

- Who Alma is, how sessions work and what the learner can expect.
- The learner's current feelings about education, any known anxieties or triggers, and what has and has not worked for them before.
- Practical arrangements: session location, times, what to bring, how to raise a concern, and how the learner will travel to and from sessions.
- An introduction to the assigned learning mentor by name and background.
- Any immediate health, medical or safeguarding information the family wants to share before the first session.

Where appropriate, the Director of Education will also speak directly with the learner at this stage, if they wish to.

Stage 3: Pre-Session Administration

Before the first session takes place, the following must be completed:

- Consent form signed by parent or carer, covering data use, photography, emergency contacts and any other consents relevant to the placement.
- Safeguarding information shared with the family: who the DSL is, how to report a concern and what Alma's duty to share information means in practice.
- Emergency contact details confirmed and recorded.
- Any medical needs or medication requirements noted and, where relevant, a supporting plan agreed.
- Session format, frequency and location confirmed in writing.
- Travel arrangements to and from sessions confirmed with the family or commissioning body.

Complete checks before the first session

Consent, safeguarding checks and emergency contacts must all be in place before the first session goes ahead. They are never caught up afterwards.

Stage 4: An Empty Venue Visit

Where the session location is an Alma hub or a community venue the learner has not visited before, Alma offers an empty venue visit ahead of the first session: a short, low-pressure visit at a quiet time, so the learner can see the space, meet their learning mentor, and know what to expect before anyone else is there. This is offered as standard for learners who may find a new environment unsettling, and is always optional.

Stage 5: First Session and Early Sessions

The first session is about relationship-building, not assessment. The learning mentor introduces themselves, spends time getting to know the learner and makes clear that there is no pressure to perform. The first session includes:

- A brief, age-appropriate health and safety orientation for the venue: where the exits are, what to do if there is a fire or emergency, who to speak to at the venue if needed.
- An informal conversation about the learner's interests, what they enjoy and what they find difficult.
- An introduction to how sessions will work: when they happen, what they might look like, what the learner can expect from their learning mentor.

The first session is not an assessment
There is no formal learning or testing in the first session. It is about building relationship and trust, and staff never pressure a learner to perform.

Early sessions, typically the first one to two weeks, are kept low-pressure and exploratory. The learning mentor's first priority is to establish trust. Formal learning activities are introduced gradually and at a pace that the learner can manage.

If a learner's anxiety or presentation means that even this initial period needs to be extended, the Director of Education will discuss this with the family and adjust the induction timeline accordingly.

Stage 6: Baseline Assessment

Within the first two weeks of provision, the learning mentor completes three baseline assessments. These are informal, low-stakes and carried out within sessions as part of normal activity. They are not presented to the learner as formal tests.

English Baseline

An informal assessment of the learner's reading and writing, calibrated to their age and the referral information already held. This gives the learning mentor a working understanding of current attainment, confidence with written tasks and any identified literacy needs. It is not a standardised test and does not result in a grade or level.

Mathematics Baseline

An informal assessment of number, calculation and mathematical reasoning, again calibrated to age and prior information. As with the English baseline, the aim is to understand the learner's starting point and confidence, not to produce a score.

Wellbeing and Barriers to Learning Check

A short structured conversation or simple scaled activity that helps the learning mentor understand how the learner is feeling in general, what gets in the way of their learning and what supports them. This covers areas including:

- General mood and emotional state.
- Whether they feel safe and settled at home and in sessions.
- How they feel about themselves and their ability to learn.
- Their energy, concentration and engagement across a typical day.
- Any specific worries, anxieties or things that make learning harder.

This is a wellbeing and planning tool, not a clinical or diagnostic assessment. It does not replace any assessment that may be carried out by an external professional and is not used to diagnose or

categorise the learner. Its purpose is to help the learning mentor plan sessions that respond to the whole person, not just academic starting points.

Results of all three baseline assessments are recorded in the learner's file and used to inform the Individual Learning Plan.

Stage 7: Individual Learning Plan

Within two weeks of the first session, the Director of Education and the learning mentor complete an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) for the learner. The ILP draws on:

- The EHC plan and any other referral or assessment documentation already held.
- The three baseline assessments completed during induction.
- Information gathered from the family during first contact and early sessions.
- The learning mentor's observations of the learner during early sessions.

The ILP sets out:

- The learner's current starting points in English and mathematics.
- Key strengths, interests and motivators.
- Known barriers to learning and the strategies that help.
- Learning objectives for the next term, framed in plain language.
- Any specific adjustments or accommodations in place.

The ILP is shared with the parent or carer and, where relevant, the commissioning body. A copy is held in the learner's file. It is reviewed at least every term, or sooner if the learner's needs or circumstances change significantly.

4. Induction Checklist

The Director of Education maintains an induction checklist for each new learner. This is a working document that tracks which stages have been completed and flags any outstanding items. The checklist covers:

- Pre-placement documentation reviewed and placement confirmed.
- Venue risk assessment completed.
- First contact call completed with parent or carer.
- Consent form signed.
- Emergency contacts recorded.
- Medical and health information noted.
- Safeguarding information shared with family.
- Travel arrangements confirmed.
- Empty venue visit offered and, where taken up, completed.
- First session completed.

- Health and safety orientation at venue completed.
- English baseline assessment completed.
- Mathematics baseline assessment completed.
- Wellbeing and barriers to learning check completed.
- Individual Learning Plan drafted, shared and filed.

The checklist is completed within the first two weeks of provision. Where any item cannot be completed within that timeframe, the reason is noted and a revised date is agreed with the family or commissioning body.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The Director of Education

The Director of Education:

- Oversees all aspects of the induction process for each new learner.
- Conducts the first contact call with the family.
- Ensures pre-session administration is completed before the first session.
- Reviews baseline assessment outcomes with the learning mentor.
- Drafts and approves the Individual Learning Plan within two weeks.
- Shares the ILP with the family and commissioning body.
- Maintains the induction checklist and ensures all items are completed.

The Learning Mentor

The learning mentor:

- Delivers the first and early sessions with a relationship-first approach.
- Completes the health and safety orientation at the session location on the first day.
- Carries out the three baseline assessments within the first two weeks, in a low-pressure and age-appropriate way.
- Records observations and assessment outcomes and shares these with the Director of Education.
- Contributes to the development of the Individual Learning Plan.
- Raises any concerns about the learner's welfare, safety or presentation with the Director of Education without delay.

6. Communication with Families and Commissioning Bodies

Families are kept informed throughout the induction process. The Director of Education is the main point of contact for families during induction and is available to answer questions or discuss concerns at any stage.

Where a placement is commissioned by a local authority or school, the Director of Education provides a brief induction summary at the end of the two-week period. This confirms that the checklist has been completed, that baseline assessments have been carried out and that an ILP is in place. It does not include personal or clinical details beyond what the commissioning body requires for oversight purposes.

7. Flexibility and Individual Need

Not every induction will follow an identical timeline. For some learners, the process will move quickly and smoothly. For others, particularly those with high levels of anxiety, trauma histories or previous negative experiences of education, it may take longer to establish trust and complete all stages.

Alma does not put a rigid time limit on the relationship-building phase of induction. The Director of Education discusses any change of pace with the family, agrees a revised plan, and keeps the commissioning body updated where a placement is commissioned.

Special Circumstances

Where the two-week deadline cannot be met because of the learner's needs, it will be extended. Staff will never rush to meet a deadline if doing so would impact the learner's wellbeing. The commissioning body is kept updated if this is the case.

8. Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Director of Education and the Advisory Board, or sooner if required by changes in legislation or statutory guidance. Any necessary amendments will be communicated to all staff. This policy was approved by Melanie Steel, Director of Education, in August 2026 and is due for review in August 2027.