

Divisions Affected – All

CABINET 15 July 2025

Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) Policy Report of Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to —
 - a) Note the recommendations contained in the body of this report and to consider and determine its response to the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and
 - b) Agree that, once Cabinet has responded, relevant officers will continue to provide each meeting of the Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee with a brief written update on progress made against actions committed to in response to the recommendations for 12 months, or until they are completed (if earlier).

REQUIREMENT TO RESPOND

2. In accordance with section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, the Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee requires that, within two months of the consideration of this report, the Cabinet publish a response to this report and any recommendations.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

3. The Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the draft Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) Policy at its meeting on 13 June 2025. The draft policy had been revised after the Committee considered it on 22 November 2024, [with the Committee making recommendations to Cabinet about this](#), and the Committee had requested it be reviewed again by the Committee before its submission to Cabinet. The Committee had previously agreed that the deadline of February 2025 the Committee had recommended for the policy to

be rewritten should be extended, given that the co-productive work being undertaken to rewrite the draft policy was proceeding fruitfully.

4. The Committee would like to thank the Leader of the Council, Cllr Liz Leffman, the Director of Children's Services, Lisa Lyons, the Deputy Director of Education and Inclusions, Kate Reynolds, and Deb Smit, Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion, for attending to present the report and to answer the Committee's questions.

SUMMARY

5. The Leader of the Council began by noting that the Local Area SEND Inspection had criticised the Council for not having such a policy in place. The Leader noted that the work to develop the policy had been ongoing for a year and expressed the desire to finalise it.
6. The Deputy Director reminded the Committee that, whilst concerns had been raised about the draft parents' guide in particular, that was still a work in progress. The policy itself aimed to ensure fairness and transparency and was modelled on good practice from other authorities. It was not the Council's intention that this would necessarily be the final iteration. It was possible that an implementation period might lead to revision and the policy might require future adjustment but there was no benefit that the Council could see to further delay in having an approved policy in place.
7. Members discussed co-production and deadlines and raised concerns about the significant cost associated with the substantial increase in the number of children receiving EOTAS. Members also discussed monitoring of EOTAS packages and the performance and progression of children with such.
8. The Committee considered it appropriate for the policy to move forward to Cabinet so that Cabinet could decide whether or not to approve it. However, the Committee made one recommendation relating to the associated guidance.

RECOMMENDATION

9. The Committee recognised that there was a significant level of frustration felt by parents and carers and was grateful for the insights provided by those who took the time to write to, and to publicly address, the Committee. The Committee declined to request a deferral of the Cabinet decision on the policy, as some had suggested, but did discuss whether it was possible to separate the EOTAS policy from the EOTAS guidance.
10. The Committee decided that it would be appropriate to do so. The Committee recognised that the policy should be finalised swiftly, in order to ensure both compliance but also transparency, but considered that there should be time after the policy has been submitted for Cabinet approval for parents and carers to be able to work with the Council to co-produce the guidance for

parents and carers that arises from the policy.

11. The Committee also considers that it would be appropriate for the Committee to review the guidance before it is submitted to Cabinet.

Recommendation 1: That the Council, if the draft EOTAS Policy is approved by Cabinet, should commit to co-producing the parent carer guidance relating to the policy in a timely fashion with it being reviewed by the Committee before it is submitted to Cabinet.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION

12. The Committee anticipates reviewing the EOTAS guidance during this municipal year.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

13. Under Part 6.2 (13) (a) of the Constitution Scrutiny has the following power: 'Once a Scrutiny Committee has completed its deliberations on any matter a formal report may be prepared on behalf of the Committee and when agreed by them the Proper Officer will normally refer it to the Cabinet for consideration.
14. Under Part 4.2 of the Constitution, the Cabinet Procedure Rules, s 2 (3) iv) the Cabinet will consider any reports from Scrutiny Committees.

Anita Bradley
Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annex: Pro-forma Response Template

Background papers: None

Other Documents: None

Contact Officer: Richard Doney
Scrutiny Officer
richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

July 2025