



CONWY EDUCATION SERVICE

“Education otherwise” than at school/Some frequently asked questions

If you have decided, or are considering, educating your child outside the school system we hope that the information which follows will assist you.

Do children have to go to school?

The 1996 Education Act imposes a duty on parents or guardians to “secure the education of their children” of “compulsory school age” but this can be done either by regular attendance at school or “otherwise”. Obviously, for most children this means that they will attend the school which serves their locality but for many and various reasons, a small minority of parents will want to take on the responsibility of educating their own children outside the state system. Some may send their children for private education to independent schools (whether day or boarding); others will want to take on the “duty to educate” themselves.

What is a parent’s duty?

Under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act, parents of children not registered at schools need to "cause [the child] to receive efficient full time education suitable to his or her age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he or she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."

Note that this education must be **full time** – this means regular work, though that length of time is not specified. As guidance, children in school spend between 21 (at infant age) and 25 (at secondary age) hours on school work each week.

What is “efficient” education?

This is not defined in the Act either. It is up to parents to fulfill their duty according to any reasonable interpretation of the term. Certainly what is provided need not be the same kind of “lessons” as are provided at school; it will be up to the parent to show that the programme of work is helping the child to learn and that the child is developing according to age, ability and aptitude.

How do I go about it?

If your child is below statutory school age [the term after his or her fifth birthday] then you do not need to do anything.

If your child is over five years of age and you intend to educate your child at home, we would be grateful if you could inform the Local Education Authority by writing to the Chief Education Officer, Education Services, Government Buildings, Dinerth Road, Colwyn Bay LL28 4UL, stating that you intend educating your child at home as from a particular date and also complete the enclosed form.

If your child has been to school before, either within the County or before you moved here, then you need to write to the school and ask for him or her to be “de-registered.”

Following receipt of the request one of the Chief Education Officer’s staff may write to you and suggest a time and date for a visit to meet with you and your child to discuss what you are doing and what programmes of work you may intend to follow.

It may be helpful for you to know some of the considerations that the adviser will note. These include:

- the nature, balance and appropriateness of the curriculum;
- methods of study;
- nature of the provision;
- the environment of learning;
- the organisation of the learning.

You will have the opportunity to discuss these matters during the visit and to raise any issues you would wish clarified.

It may take some time to arrange this visit, since the number of Education Advisers are limited and most of their time is spent working with schools. Please do not expect the Education Adviser to tell you how to educate your child. The Education Adviser’s job is to check if you are doing this effectively.

What if my child is registered as a pupil of a Special School?

Here the situation is rather different.

The 1996 Act identifies responsibilities for both parents and the LEA. The Statement of Need identifies the provision necessary and parents **must** consult the LEA before considering educating their child otherwise than in the school named in Section 4 of the statement.

In the case of children at Special Schools early discussion is vital to ensure both parental and LEA responsibilities are met.

What if I don’t send information but just keep the child out of school?

Under the 1996 Education Act, Conwy Education Authority must satisfy themselves that parents are fulfilling their duty. If you don’t provide any evidence - either in written form or by interview - then a refusal to provide that evidence may be enough for the Authority to decide that the child is not being effectively educated and we would then take steps to get the child back to school. The Welsh Assembly Government is currently consulting on ‘active’ monitoring by local authorities which would require parents to provide such information

What kind of “evidence” will satisfy the Education Authority?

It can be, as noted above, a written programme of work. It might be an interview with a parent or parents, or samples of a child’s work. The best evidence, of course, is a combination of the above, plus a meeting with the child. The only real criterion is that the evidence would convince a reasonable person that the child is receiving efficient full time education suitable for his or her age, ability and aptitude.

What happens if the Chief Education Officer or his Education Adviser is not satisfied?

Then we will tell you we are not satisfied and we will say what it is that does not satisfy us. This will happen by letter and will give a reasonable period of time for you to improve the situation.

And then?

If we are still not satisfied, then the Education Authority will request you to return him or her to school. But, we would stress that this will only happen if we are convinced that you are **not** educating according to your child’s age, ability and aptitude – and we hope that by detailed discussion, we will be able to show you exactly why this is so.

If I am able to educate my child at home, how often will the Education Authority check?

Normally, if the Education Authority is fully satisfied with the first evidence, then there will be no further need for visits. However an Annual Review will need to be undertaken.

What about compulsory subjects?

There are **none** – the National Curriculum applies only to LEA Maintained schools. You will probably want to take account of the fact that the National Curriculum specifies the following subjects:

English	Welsh	Mathematics	Science	Design Technology
History	Geography	Physical Education	Art	Music
Religious Education	A Foreign language (at secondary level)			

It seems clear, however, that in the primary school these subjects may not be taught as separate subjects but can be delivered through integrated and whole curriculum activities.

But what you teach [or leave out] and how your child learns is up to you, provided that you can demonstrate that the education is appropriate, efficient and full time. There is no one form of education; children learn in many different ways and at times at different times and speeds and from different people. Education does not always need to follow a set plan of “lessons” or a “timetable”.

Some parents use materials and ideas from outside agencies such as:
Education Otherwise

P.O. Box 7420
LONDON
N9 9SG

Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope with your enquiry.

Web page address www.education-otherwise.org

e-mail: enquiries@education-otherwise.org

Finally, a word of advice

DON'T decide to educate your children outside the school system:

- As a way of getting out of short term quarrels with someone in your child's school. Talk it out with the headteacher instead, or refer it to the School's Governing Body or the Education Service.
- When your child has not been attending school on a regular basis or has not been on time. If you can't get your child to school regularly now, you'll have great difficulty in providing a full time education for him or her.
- As a final or once and for all decision. You might manage well when your child is at infant level but what about when he/she may need to study for GCSE at 16 in practical subjects?

DO

- Talk to your child before making any decision
- Think long and hard about it. It's a great responsibility and a considerable commitment of time and energy.
- Plan what you intend to do.
- Look at the costs involved – visits? equipment? Books?
- Remember that your child may well miss the social side of school, contact with other children, joint activities and impetus which comes from seeing other children's work.

BUT

- If you change your mind, Conwy Education Authority will be glad to talk to you about your child's entry into one of our schools.



R Geraint James
Statutory Head of Education Services