

GWYNEDD COUNCIL

POLICY ON HOME EDUCATION

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. Draw attention to the LEA's responsibilities towards families who opt for a home report.
2. Highlight family monitoring procedures.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Parents and LEA's Responsibilities

1. Education for children is mandatory, but not so school attendance. Parents have a responsibility to ensure that their children are properly taught in accordance with Section 7 of the Education Act (1996 Act), that states:

‘The parent of every child of mandatory school age has a responsibility to ensure that he/she receives a full-time, effective education, that is appropriate for:

- a. his age-group, ability, and aptitude; and
- b. any special educational needs that he may have either through regular attendance at school or otherwise

2. The 1996 Act also requires the LEA to ensure that children of mandatory school age receive an ‘appropriate education’. Further, the Act describes how the LEA should fulfil their responsibilities in practice and monitor the educational provision.

3. Parents Responsibilities

A parent is entitled to educate his/her child at home, however, it is imperative that the education provided is “appropriate education – the 1996 Act also states:

“When implementing all their powers and our due responsibilities in accordance with the Education Acts ----- LEA's ----- should take into account the general principle that pupils should be taught in accordance with their parents wishes, as long as that is compatible with the provision of effective instruction and training, and avoid unreasonable public expenditure”.

This supports parents conditional right to educate their children at home.

4. Implementation Methods

Parents are not legally obliged to notify the LEA of their intention to educate a child, who has not been registered at a state school, at home. For instance, if the child is below the statutory age for school attendance, attends a private school or transfers to another school.

Should a parent decide to withdraw his/her child from school, a community school, under voluntary control or endowed, the school has a responsibility to notify the LEA of that decision. Education Regulations (Pupils Registration) 1995, regulation 9 (1) (c), immediately cater for pupils who are taken off the register, after receiving a letter from the parent. A Headteacher has a responsibility to notify the LEA within 10 days of notification (regulation 12 (3))

5. Special Educational Needs

A child who has special educational needs can be educated at home as long as parents comply with the same statutory duty:

“The parent of a child who is of mandatory school age has an obligation to ensure that he/she receives effective full-time education that is appropriate for his age-group, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs that he may have, either through regular school attendance or otherwise.”

6. When a statement of special educational needs has been prepared on a child, that names a Designated Special School, parents are required to secure the LEA’s approval before withdrawing their child from the school in compliance with 1995 School Regulation 9 (2) (Pupil Registration).

7. If the LEA agrees that home education is appropriate for the child, then the statement would be amended to reflect that.

8. The LEA has legal responsibilities to ensure that parents fulfil their obligation to provide appropriate education. Gwynedd LEA has designated the Education Welfare Service to be responsible for monitoring families through co-ordinating visits, up-dating databases and keeping the appropriate paperwork up to date.

The provision is co-ordinated in consultation with the Advisory Service (Cwmni Cynnal) and the Psychology Service (SENJC).

9. The purpose of the visits is to ensure that:

- a.** children’s home education is regularly monitored and progress is evaluated
- b.** quality of the education provided complies with Section 7 of the 1996 Act
- c.** referral from any concerns regarding the children’s education or well-being is sent to the relevant agency
- d.** the LEA fulfils its statutory responsibilities regarding monitoring of families who provide home education.

10. A sheet has been produced for parents/carers, that explains home education entitlements and responsibilities. These sheets are distributed through the Education Welfare Service.

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IMPLEMENTATION METHODS FOR PARENTS WHO OPT FOR HOME EDUCATION FOR THEIR CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the implementation methods and guidance to enable Gwynedd LEA to fulfil its statutory functions as regards children who receive home education, under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act (previously known as Section 36 of the 1944 Education Act) that states.

“A parent of every child of mandatory school age should ensure that he/she receives effective full-time education that is appropriate for:

- a. his age-group, ability and aptitude and
- b. any special educational needs that he may have, either through regular school attendance or otherwise".

PRINCIPLES

- The LEA believes in the value of school-based education as it provides a broad and well-balanced curriculum, that promotes social development, moral, spiritual awareness and equal opportunities.
- The LEA respects parents and carers entitlement to opt to educate their children at home.
- The LEA wishes to promote active dealings with the parents and carers at all times.
- The LEA recognizes that teaching a child at home can set far greater challenges in providing effective and appropriate full-time education than would be the case if the child attended a school.

IMPLEMENTATION METHODS

The following sections are currently jointly applicable as regards monitoring and supporting children who receive home education in Gwynedd:

- The Education Welfare Service
- The Advisory Service – Cwmni Cynnal
- The Psychology Service – SENJC.

Section 9 of the Education Act (1996) stipulates:

“The Secretary of State for Education and LEA’s will consider the general principle that pupils will be educated in accordance with their parents wishes”.

The LEA is responsible for monitoring and supporting children who are educated at home under Section 7 of the Act, and they are obliged to ensure that children of school age receive “appropriate” education.

There is no legal definition of “appropriate”, consequently there is no standard interpretation. However, it is a statutory requirement under the Act that an LEA take action if it appears that the child does not receive appropriate education. The education department will give a co-ordinated response to families who educate their children at home and will ensure that LEA obligations are met.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURE

- 1.** Once a parent/carer has stated an intention to teach their child (children) at home (either through notifying the Education Welfare Service or a School), the Education Department should be notified.
 - 1.1** If the school or the SENJC become aware that parents/carer may be considering providing their child (children) at home, then it would be appropriate to refer to the Education Welfare Service within 10 days.
 - 1.2** If the school does not have any concerns about the child (children) being educated at home, they should notify the Education Officer.
- 2.** Once the parents/carers have decided to notify the school, they will be sent a letter so that an initial visit to the home can be arranged.
- 3.** The Education Welfare Service, in consultation with Cwmni Cynnal, will organize an initial visit to the home and conduct a preliminary assessment of the provision.
 - 3.1** The Education Welfare Service will, where appropriate, notify the Social Services Department of their intention to visit. If there are any personal safety issues, this will be expressed and recorded prior to the visit.
 - 3.2** If parents do not respond, refuse access or it appears that they are not collaborating on two or more occasions, then the case will be referred for the attention of the Education Officer.
- 4.** In instances where the Education Welfare Service after having received an adviser’s report specifying that the provision is unsuitable for a pupil’s age-group, ability and aptitude, they will, in consultation with the Advisory Service (Cwmni Cynnal) and the Psychology (SENJCSp), ensure that the child returns to a suitable educational placement.
 - 4.1** Any recommendation to return to LEA provision will be prefaced by contact with:
 - Parents
 - Educational Welfare Service
 - Education Officer
 - School
 - Other agencies as appropriate.

4.2 If parents refuse to collaborate in returning their child to an educational placement, the LEA will consider referring parents through issuing a school Attendance order.

5. If, at any stage during the monitoring procedure, the education Welfare Service has evidence or major concerns regarding the child (children's) well-being and safety, then these should be discussed with the officer named by the LEA as designated child Protection officer and the appropriate measures taken.

6. In the case of an SEN child, the Education Welfare Service will contact the Psychology Service (SENJC) and the Advisory Service (Cwmni Cynnal).

6.1 Where an SEN Statement has been prepared on a child, the Welfare Service will contact the appropriate support service to ensure that their educational requirements are met.

6.2 If a child has an SEN Statement, and attends a special school named in the Statement, schools are required to obtain the LEA's permission before that child's name can be deleted from the school register.

1995 EDUCATION REGULATIONS (PUPILS REGISTRATION) REGN. 9/2

7. All notes and relevant reports on families who provide home education, will be retained by the Education Welfare Service.

8. Officers who visit, should avoid putting themselves in potentially difficult situations. Personal safety should be prioritized when making arrangements for a visit to a home. Another adult should always be present when interviews are conducted with children. If there are concerns about personal safety, other placements can be suggested to hold meetings and/or two Officers visit. These concerns should always be discussed with the Education Welfare Service manager and noted.

9. During home visits, procedures should be followed so as to ensure that the visiting Officer has notified their line manager/secretary regarding details of the location and how long in their judgement, the investigation will last.

10. So as to ensure successful implementation of the procedures, everybody who collaborate in the process will need to understand their individual responsibilities, and ensure that links are maintained.

REASONS WHY PARENTS OPT FOR HOME EDUCATION

Parents choose to opt out of the State Education system and provide their children with home education for several reasons.

Wherever possible, the Education Welfare Service will monitor that information and Officers will encourage parents to discuss why they decide to provide home education. In most cases, parents are willing to provide reasons, some, however, choose not to divulge that information. The reasons listed by parents are outlined in the following categories. The “not known” category covers those parents who opt not to divulge their reasons.

Details of pupil numbers who fall under each category are stored on the LEA’s database.

a. Admissions

In those instances where the parents are not granted their preferred choice of school to transfer to. Occasionally, they will consider home education until a place becomes available.

b. Bullying

Parents who gather that their children are being bullied may transfer their child from the school, often in order to re-build self-esteem and self-confidence.

c. Dyslexia/SEN/More able, gifted and talented pupils

Some parents feel that their children’s requirements are better met through home education.

d. Absences

Pupils who become disaffected by Year 10 or 11 fall under this category, and often, home education is decided upon following much consultation and support is secured from the Education Welfare Service.

e. Traveller Families

Due to the transitory nature of travellers families life-style, their children’s education may be impacted. Parents occasionally opt to educate their children at home in order to reduce as much as possible the impairing impact of their lifestyle.

f. Medical/ Stress

Perhaps parents of children who have spent substantial periods absent from school due to illness or school phobia, despite support from the Education Welfare Service and the Psychology Service, will ultimately opt for home education.

g. School Environment/Policy

Parents occasionally disagree with a school’s particular policy and its management arrangements. Information about individual schools who come under this category is always transferred for the attention of the Quality Section.

f. Religion

Some families cherish religious beliefs they feel that will not be supported or protected within the schools system and therefore opt to teach their children at home, so as to ensure that they receive that which they consider as appropriate moral and religious education/up-bringing.

Number of children returning to the State Education system

Children return to mainstream schools for three principal reasons:

- a. parental choice
- b. the LEA no longer recommend the educational provision and therefore recommend a return to school.
- c. parents move away from the County.

Whenever the child returns to school on the LEA's recommendation, an Officer from the Education Department will contact the Educational Welfare Service.