



ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION POLICY



Introduction

Elective home education is when parents or guardians decide to provide home-based education for their child rather than sending them to school. Home educated children are therefore not registered at mainstream schools, special schools, pupil referral units, or colleges.

The decision to home educate should never be taken lightly. Before parents decide to make such a commitment, they need to talk and listen to their child and also consider the time and energy they will need to invest. Parents should be aware that if they choose to home educate, they assume financial responsibility for their child's education, including the costs for equipment, visits, books and tutors, as well as the cost of any public examinations.

Parents should also be aware that children must continue to receive education until the end of compulsory education (i.e. the last Friday in June in the academic year the child reaches the age of 16).

It would not be in the child or parents' best interests if the parents chose to educate their child at home as a response to a disagreement with a teacher or the school. It would therefore be advisable to try and talk through any issues with the Head Teacher or Governors if this is the case. Home education is not a way of solving a child's non-attendance at school unless parents and the child are committed and enthusiastic about it.

Another aspect to take into consideration is the social side of school life, such as contact with other children, joint activities and the stimulus of seeing the work of other children. Parents will need to plan how the child's social development can be maintained or extended.

The rights and responsibilities of the parents

The law states that all parents have a duty to ensure that their child receives an efficient, full time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs they may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. In most cases parents are happy for their child's education to be provided by a school. Occasionally, parents prefer to arrange their child's education 'otherwise' than at school.

Parents, therefore, have a right to educate their child at home providing they fulfil their duty to ensure that their child, of compulsory school age, receives full-time education that is efficient and suitable for their age, aptitude, ability, and any special educational needs they may have.

Education can be said to be "efficient" if it achieves what it sets out to achieve.

'Suitable education' is defined as one which prepares a child for life in modern civilised society and enables him or her to achieve his or her potential. It is suitable if it equips a child for life within the community to which he or she belongs, as long as this does not reduce the child's chance to adopt some other form of life in later years, should he or she wish to do so. This is important where a family have particular religious or cultural beliefs.

Parents do not need to ask the permission of the Local Authority (LA) to begin home educating. If their child has been attending school, the parents need to notify the governing body of the school, normally through the headteacher, of their intention to home educate.

This must be in writing.

It is then the responsibility of the school to notify the LA within ten days.

The name of the pupil is only removed from the school register when the school has received the written notification from the parent that the pupil is receiving education other than at school.

If a child has not attended school then the parent should inform the LA directly although there is no legal requirement for them to do so.

Parents seeking to home educate a child registered at a special school must obtain the consent of the LA to withdraw their child from the school.

The responsibilities of the Local Authority (LA)

The LA needs to be satisfied that a child is receiving an effective and suitable education at home, appropriate for the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs.

Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996 states: 'If it appears to the local authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they shall serve a notice in writing to the parent requiring them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.'

While parents are under no legal obligation to meet with a representative of the LA or engage in discussing their child's education, Lord Donaldson has stated that:

'...it would be sensible for them to do so. If parents give no information or adopt the course....of merely stating that they are discharging their duty without giving any details of how they are doing so, the LA will have to consider and decide whether it 'appears' to it that the parents are in breach of Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996'

Suitability

Where the LA is not satisfied that a child is receiving a suitable education, the LA will:

- contact the parents in writing, explaining the concerns and reasons for concluding that provision is unsuitable, and serving the parents a notice requiring them to provide evidence of suitable education within 15 days.
- if there is no reply or an unsatisfactory response, a further letter will be delivered by an Education Welfare Officer. The letter will include a notice stating which school the LA will name in a school attendance order and giving the parents the opportunity to choose an alternative.
- serve a school attendance order naming the school where the child should be registered.

If at any stage the parents provide information which satisfies the LA that a suitable education is being provided then no further action would be taken.

Initial contact

Once the LA has received notification of a parent's intent to withdraw their child and home educate, a letter will be sent to the parents letting them know that an Improvement & Effectiveness Officer (IEO) is available to meet with them to discuss the suitability of the education being provided and provide any guidance to assist in the working and learning of the pupil.

Again, while LAs have no automatic right of access to a parent's home and parents are under no duty to provide information to the LA, parents may, if they wish, permit access to their home, or request an alternative venue for a meeting.

Initial meeting

At the initial meeting, parents are able to discuss any concerns or queries they may have. The IEO will also explain that parents who home educate assume financial responsibility for their child's education, including the cost of public examinations, and that the child must continue to receive suitable education until the end of compulsory education. Also at the initial meeting, parents and the IEO should consider and agree what future contact there will be.

Following the meeting, a report will be prepared by the IEO setting out any recommendations that were discussed and agreed and the reasons for them and sent to the parents.

Alternatives to a meeting

Parents may wish to decline a meeting in their home or alternative venue. Where this is the case, it should be possible to discuss and evaluate the parents' educational provision by alternative means. Parents might prefer:-

- to write a report
- provide samples of work
- have the provision endorsed by a recognised third party
- provide evidence in some other appropriate form of the education being provided

Where parents decline a meeting, the LA should provide the same information that would be communicated at a meeting in letter form.

Therefore, when the LA is made aware of a child's withdrawal from school, the LA will:

- acknowledge the withdrawal in writing.

- invite the parents to meet with an IEO, as a named contact within the LA, to discuss the suitability of the proposed education programme.
- provide information and support materials if requested.
- consider and decide whether it appears that a child is not receiving a suitable education if the parents do not engage with the LA.

What about part-time attendance?

This is also known as ‘flexi-schooling’ or ‘flexible school attendance’ and is an arrangement between the parents and the school where the child is registered. The child would attend school part time and be home educated for the rest of the time.

This arrangement is possible provided that:

- the school has given permission, authorised by its Governing Body
- evidence for the arrangements for education other than at school can be provided and are judged suitable

It is important to note that a school does not have to agree to this arrangement or give reasons for not agreeing to such a request from parents.

Informing other agencies

Schools have a very important role in monitoring the wellbeing of their pupils and sharing concerns with, or making referrals to, Social Care when a child is believed to be ‘in need’, or when abuse or neglect is suspected. When schools are no longer able to fulfil this

responsibility because a child is receiving their education at home, the LA will inform Social Care of this. This information will be retained on the LA database, however no action will be taken unless information is received indicating Social Care involvement is required, and this decision will then be reviewed.

Likewise, because certain health services are accessed by being on a school roll, the Health Service will also be informed of a child receiving their education at home.

Ongoing monitoring

The LA will make contact on an annual basis. Contact will normally be made in writing and would seek a meeting or an updated report.

Where a meeting or updated report leads to concerns about the efficiency or suitability of the education being provided for the child, more frequent contact may be required or further clarification sought.

Returning to mainstream school

If a parent subsequently wishes their child to return to school then an application should be made through the Schools Admissions Section. It should be noted that re-admission is not automatic and is dependent on places being available in the specific year group.

Children with Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Children with statements of special educational needs can be home educated. It remains the LA's duty to ensure that the education provided by parents is efficient, suitable and that the child's special educational needs are being met.

If the parents' education of their child at home results in an education which falls short of meeting the child's needs, then the parents are not making 'suitable' arrangements. The LA cannot therefore be absolved of its responsibility to arrange the provision in the statement. Even if the LA is satisfied, the LA remains under a duty to maintain the child's statement in accordance with the SEN Code of Practice.

When a child is home educated, the LA will continue to hold an annual review and this will include assessing whether the statement is still appropriate. Rights of appeal to the SEN Tribunal for Wales still apply.

The review meeting should take place in the most appropriate location, usually either the home or LA offices and should normally be chaired by the LA.

When a child has a statement of special educational needs which names a special school in Part 4 of the statement, parents must obtain the consent of the LA before removing the child to home educate, and the child's name may not be removed from the register of the school without the consent of the LA.

Practical help

What could the curriculum look like?

All LA schools teach the National Curriculum. Children educated at home do not have to follow the National Curriculum but would be encouraged to do so in subjects where they expect to take a GCSE examination at 16.

They should, however, follow a curriculum which is broad, balanced and suitable for their individual needs. The Government places emphasis on English (literacy), Mathematics (numeracy), Science and Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

A good education will ensure your child gains attitudes, skills and knowledge that fit them to live in and adapt to the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

- a broad education that introduces your child to the skills and knowledge of a range of subjects and types of subject which ensure an opening of the mind;
- a balanced education which ensures no one subject area takes up so much time that there is no room for others, or for creative use of leisure;
- any education must be suitable to the individual needs of your child. A curriculum plan should therefore take into account the child's age, aptitudes, ability and any special needs that they may have.

What should your child study?

A good guide comes from schools where most children study English, Mathematics, Science, Design and Technology, History, Geography, Art, Music, Physical Education and Religious Education.

From the age of 11 they may study a modern foreign language as well. Children also spend time on personal and social issues such as health and sex education and issues relating to everyday life. Citizenship has now been added to the National Curriculum.

Unless parents object, all pupils are taught how to use Information Technology and computer hardware and software. Older children receive careers advice to help prepare them for life after school.

How is your child going to study?

It is important to consider not only what your child will learn but how they learn and what approaches suit them best. Not all learning comes from books or printed sources and where appropriate children should make use of a variety of media, the Internet and educational visits.

Children also need to acquire skills as well as knowledge. For example they need to be encouraged to develop discussion skills, problem solving skills and social skills.

Children ought to take part in physical education, games and practical work so that they can develop a range of physical skills.

Often learning involves children taking an active role in their own work. They carry out experiments, conduct surveys, draw pictures from real life, interview members of the public and make studies at real locations.

Remember that good teaching includes regular feedback. Your child needs to know when something has been done well and, if it has not, how it could be improved. Successes and failures form the framework of the learning process and an effective programme recognises this fact.

A useful checklist

How will your child work?	Y	N
• Is there a good flat surface to work at?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is there somewhere to store books and work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is the working area free from noise and other distractions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is the space available for your child to work at when it is needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is it warm, light and tidy? How well organised will you be?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is there a clear written timetable/programme of study and if there is, do you keep to it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do you keep a record of work that has been covered and do you have plans for future work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is each piece of work dated and clearly laid out?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is the relationship between different tasks established?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Are folders and books well maintained so that work is valued and preserved? What resources will you use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do you have a good supply of stationery such as exercise books, paper, pens, pencils and rubbers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Does your child have access to basic equipment and other learning tools such as paints, brushes, a pair of compasses, a calculator and a dictionary?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do you have appropriate textbooks for the subjects being studied?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Have you checked that the books and other materials are well matched to your child's age and ability?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do you have access to a computer / printer / digital camera etc	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do you make use of TV and radio schools' broadcasts, including means of recording (if appropriate)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do you make use of your local library?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Have you used the local area as a starting point for learning (buildings for history, country walks for geography, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do you take your child to museums and art galleries? The IEO will ask about the resources you are providing and may be able to give some limited advice if required.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Does your child have Special Educational Needs?

If so you will need to take special care in planning the work programme so that his/her special educational needs are met. If your child has a statement of special educational needs, the statement will continue and the special educational needs described in it will have to be met. The LA has to monitor the programme carefully and there will be an annual review. Other agencies such as the Health Authority and Social Care may be involved if appropriate to the support of your child.

Do think long and hard about your decision

It is a great responsibility and a considerable commitment of time and energy.

Plan what you intend to do with your child before making a decision.

Look at the costs involved – Books, equipment, visits, your time etc.

Plan how you will provide opportunities for your child to be involved in social activities with other children and groups. The impetus which comes from such activities may provide a useful social setting and improve your child's motivation to succeed with his or her learning.

Keep your options open as your child's needs may change at different ages and stages. We will always be willing to offer a place for your child at a school that can provide for his/her needs.

Support and advice

Further information is available by contacting the Inclusion Team:

Inclusion Team

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