

Children's Services

Attendance (statutory), Child Employment/Entertainment, Elective Home Education/ Children Missing Education

ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS

1) Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to give advice to parents who intend educating their child or children at home. Please note that the term “**parents**” is used in this guidance to include “**parent(s) or carer(s)**”.

The aim is for contact with home educators to be constructive and positive. We are keen to build relationships that are rooted in mutual understanding, trust and respect. We also aim for our procedures dealing with home educating parents and children to be fair, clear, consistent, non-intrusive and timely.

2) The law

The education of a child at home is permitted subject to certain conditions imposed by the Education Act 1996 section 7, which states:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him or her to have efficient full-time education suitable to his or her age, ability and aptitude (and to any special needs he or she may have) either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”

The phrase “**or otherwise**” covers proposals for the education of children at home. This means that parents have a **legal responsibility** to provide their children with a relevant education, but that does not have to be in a school.

3) Will home educating be right for me, my child and the rest of my family?

Most parents and their children find home-educating to be a rewarding experience, deciding to educate your child at home from the start or to withdraw your child from mainstream schooling and to educate them at home is a major step which will have a significant effect on the organisation of your home life. It might be helpful before making the final decision to consider some of the questions that arise in providing home education, for example

- *Do I have a secure understanding of what is meant by an “**efficient full-time education suitable to his or her age, ability and aptitude**”?*
- *Do I have the time and energy to provide an efficient education?*
- *Can I afford the possible costs of books, visits, equipment and tutors?*

Parents choose to educate their children at home for various reasons. Most think long and hard about this way of educating. For many parents and children, home education is a rewarding and positive experience, but it will undoubtedly change your lifestyle. To do it properly is time consuming and will affect of the organisation of your days, and it may involve changes, such as giving up a job.

4) What are my reasons for wanting to home educate my child/ren?

For many home educating parents, it is part of a general philosophy on the way the family conduct their lives.

A minority of parents decide to withdraw their children from school because they may have had a disagreement with the headteacher or staff there. Their children may feel they are bullied, and some children may put pressure on parents to be allowed to stay at home, or they refuse to go to school. Most of these problems can be satisfactorily solved if they are discussed with the staff at the school or local authority, who will give help and advice on how best to proceed, so think carefully before you withdraw your child from a school and do not be persuaded by others that it is the only option available to you.

5) How to get started?

Once all the advantages and disadvantages of home education have been discussed with the whole family and a final decision to go ahead has been made, there may still remain a number of frequently asked questions, such as those listed below.

Children registered at a mainstream school

If your child is at a mainstream school, you will need to inform the head teacher in writing of your intention to deregister your child in order to home educate, you do not need permission to home educate.

Child with Education Health Care (EHC) Plan placed in specialist provision

If your child has an Education Health Care Plan and attends specialist provision, you will need also inform the head teacher in writing of your intention to home educate, however, the Local Authority EHC Planning Team will need to give consent for your child's name to be deleted from the school roll if your child is enrolled in specialist provision.

6) Provision of a suitable education

Do children educated otherwise have to follow the National Curriculum?

Parents are *not* legally required to do this. However, some find it useful to know what the National Curriculum is and what children are taught in school.

The current National Curriculum subjects are listed below.

English, mathematics, science, ICT (information & communication technology), history, geography, art, DT (design & technology), physical education, modern foreign languages (from age 11), RE (religious education – unless parents exercise their right to withdraw their children).

What does 'providing full-time education' mean?

Currently schools work for 25 or 27.5 hours a week according to the ages of their pupils. Home educating parents are under no obligation to follow these hours and each family will vary in how they organise their days to ensure that enough time is spent on teaching and learning each week.

How should teaching and children's learning be organised?

No one approach can be recommended. Parents should consider what the best teaching style is for themselves and for their children. Whatever style is adopted, it should allow children to become actively involved and provide opportunities for learning through practical activities and may well change over time.

What resources are available for use by parents and children?

- A range of books for reading for pleasure and information
- Commercially produced workbooks related to the National Curriculum
- Educational broadcasts (TV, radio) are useful, but to avoid the passive watching syndrome, the programmes should be well prepared and followed up.
- Visits to interesting places (museums, theatres, exhibitions, historic sites, lectures, nature walks, etc).
- Computer software with programmes for consolidating and extending learning in all subjects.

Who should provide the education?

Parents are responsible for ensuring that an efficient education is given. This requirement does not mean that they have to do all the teaching. Some of it can be done by suitable friends, with other home educating families or by private tutors.

How do I ensure my child receives an effective social education?

The development of social skills is an essential part of a balanced and efficient education. Learning activities out and about in the community gives children opportunities to experience social contacts, for example, clubs (gymnastics, drama, cubs, Sunday school, young musicians, youth choir, swimming and many more).

Can my child attend school part-time?

No. This is not considered viable as it blocks a place for a full-time pupil and has been found not to be in the best interests of the individual child.

If children are receiving home education, they are not on a school's register. In very exceptional circumstances governors of a school might consider making special arrangements for a short time only but the law is very clear that pupils must attend school or be educated otherwise.

Advice on examinations

Home educated children do not have to sit any Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) or GCSEs. It is possible however for home educated children to sit GCSEs if desired, although there is currently **no** funding from central government or the LA.

There are a number of different examination boards that offer GCSE qualifications, and each offer a variety of syllabuses. If your child wants to sit GCSE exams, you will need to find a centre that, for a fee, will allow your child to sit their exams there, such as a school or college. You will need a copy of the exact exam syllabus to be studied for that year and Examinations boards can send you these and copies of previous exam papers for a fee.

7) What can I expect from the Local Authority?

Will the LA support parents who decide to educate their children otherwise than in school? Once you have decided to home educate your child/ren, **you** are responsible for making suitable arrangements for their education. For children without an EHC plan, the Local Authority has a Home Education Adviser who is available to answer any questions and offer advice in relation to the provision you are making. The HEA will usually arrange to visit you or arrange to meet you at an alternative agreed venue to discuss the education you are providing

and, if necessary, give suggestions or recommendations on how what you are doing could be enhanced.

What does the Home Education Adviser look for when they meet with you?

The HEA will be interested to see how you are planning for what is to be taught and when. He or she will be interested to see examples of your child's learning and to discuss with you any suggestions or concerns. The HEA will do this in a variety of ways:

- *through discussions with parents and children;*
- *listening to children talking about their work and what they have learnt;*
- *hearing children read and asking questions*
- *looking at examples of written work, artwork, models, photographs, electronic recordings and oral presentations*

What if I do not wish to meet with the HEA

If you prefer not to meet with the HEA we are able to consider an endorsement from an education professional involved in the delivery of the programme who would be able to confirm that the education provided, in their view, is suitable.

What if my child has an EHC Plan?

A parents' right to educate their child at home applies equally where a child has an EHC Plan. If you decide to home educate your child/ren, you will be responsible for making suitable arrangements for their education. In these circumstances the EHC Planning Team will take a supervisory role in the form of monitoring and oversight.

Upon receipt of your request to electively home educate your child/ren with an EHC Plan the EHC Planning Team will liaise with you to understand your intentions as to how your child will receive a suitable education as well as meeting the needs, provision and outcomes in their EHC Plan. In most cases this will involve a meeting with an Educational Psychologist. Following this visit if the education being provided is satisfactory the local authority has no duty to arrange any special educational provision for the child. The EHC Plan will simply set out the type of special educational provision that the EHC Planning Team thinks the child requires but it will state in a suitable place that parents have made their own arrangements under s.7 of the Education Act.

EHC Planning Team still has an obligation to conduct an annual review of the EHC Plan. Your allocated EHC Coordinator will be in touch in order to take this forward.

What if I do not wish to meet with the Education Psychologist

If your child/young person has an EHC Plan, it is strongly advised that you meet with the assigned Educational Psychologist. Whilst this is not a statutory requirement the LA may conclude that the educational programme offered at home is not suitable unless another form of evidence or endorsement from an education professional is provided.

8) *What do other EHE parents and children have to say?*

These are some comments made by parents and children who are being home educated, in relation to their meetings with LA officers.

'She was so excited about your visit she couldn't eat her dinner'. (Mother of child age 7)

'It's so good to know that someone in the local authority really cares about what we do'. (Mother of secondary age child)

'Oh, we were hoping you'd come round every month so we know we're on the right lines'. (Father of girl age 13)

'It's really good when you encourage her and it's not just praise from us'. (Mother of 14 year old girl)

'Thank you for coming to see me, when it's all inside you, you want to know that what you are doing is right'. (Mother of girl, age 8)

'You're so good with autistic children you must have worked with a lot of them. She remembers you from last year and wants to talk about the same things'. (Mother of girl, age 11)

'Thank you very much for all your help!' (Sister of Y11 boy after final visit)

'Thank you for my 'check-up'. I feel very excited when you come here. And I like you very much' xxxx (written note from girl, age 7)

'I don't want you to stop coming to see me'. (Y11 girl on final visit after 4 years)

9) Conclusion – some final things you may wish to consider

- Home educating requires time, commitment and energy but can be very rewarding.
- Contact with other home educating parents can provide you with support and advice.
- Providing opportunities for your child to be involved in social activities and have contact with other children and groups can be rewarding, fun and enhance the learning experience if your child enjoys it.
- Access to the Internet either at home or through your local library may be helpful and useful.
- Consider the learning process as active, practical, and one that fully engages your child in the process.
- You may want to take full advantage of all the resources available around London e.g. museums, galleries, parks etc. which can offer stimulating and rewarding experiences if enjoyed by the child.
- Being flexible and open to change is important as your child's needs may change at different ages and stages. If following a more structured learning method, the opportunity for independent study and research, and providing a quiet area for sustained study/work will be helpful.
- Try to consider some of the costs involved. You will have to pay for any equipment and exams although home education does not need to be expensive.

- The local authority aims to have positive and supportive relationships with all home educating families.

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