

EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

Guidance for Parents Elective Home Education

Every parent of a compulsory school age child has a duty to ensure their child receives a suitable and efficient education either by enrolling them in a school and ensuring they attend or by taking responsibility for their child's education. Parents can teach their own children or be responsible for employing teachers/tutors.

Taking control of your child's education is a big responsibility, so these notes of guidance have been put together to help you. Please do not underestimate the amount of work this will mean for you as the primary educator.

Once you have decided this is the right course of action for you and your child:

- If your child attends a mainstream school, you must write to the Head teacher and inform them of your decision and the date you intend to commence electively home educating your child. The Head teacher will then remove your child from the school roll and inform the education welfare service (as required by law).
- If your child attends a special school (named in their Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plan), you must contact the Education Welfare Service, who will discuss your proposal around electively home educating with you. Once the service is confident with your proposal they will instruct the Head teacher of the school to de register your child. The legal responsibility for education then passes to you as the parent.

DfE Guidance on Elective Home Education

3.12 Schools must not seek to persuade parents to educate their children at home as a way of avoiding an exclusion or because the child has a poor attendance record. In the case of exclusion, they must follow the statutory guidance. If the pupil has a poor attendance record, the school and local authority must address the issues behind the absenteeism and use the other remedies available to them.

When the education welfare service is aware that you are educating your child you will be sent an initial introductory pack containing useful information. You will also be offered a visit to investigate if you would welcome support, the visit can either be at your home or a neutral location. One of the aims of this initial contact will be to explain your responsibilities and questions will be asked regarding the educational provision under the general headings of philosophy/approach, resources, how you will monitor and record your child's progress, social contact and future educational aspirations.

At this point if you are not sure you will be able to fulfil your duty to provide your child with a suitable education the officer can support you to place your child back into school to minimise them falling behind.

You may wish to consider flexi-schooling to allow your child to access particular equipment at the local school, or want advice and support with planning for exams, you may wish for your child to access health support usually delivered via schools or you may simply wish to be kept up to date with support services or to receive advice regarding lesson planning and schemes available to families who electively home educate.

When the time comes to establish that a suitable education is being provided (ordinarily on an annual basis), you will be contacted in writing, suggesting ways in which evidence may be submitted. This may be in the form of:

- Specific examples of learning e.g. pictures/ paintings/models, diaries of work, projects, assessments, samples of work, books, educational visits etc.
- An educational philosophy or ethos
- Written report stating:
 - Opportunities for your child to be stimulated by their learning experiences
 - Involvement in activities - showing a broad spectrum of activities to cater for wide varieties of interests appropriate to your child's stage of development
 - Access to resources/materials required to meet the objectives as parents; such as resources, books and libraries, arts and crafts materials, physical activity, ICT and
 - Opportunities for appropriate interaction with other children and other adults.

The evidence can be gathered during an arranged visit, can be posted or e-mailed to the education welfare service.

The purpose of the evidence request would be to review the progress made by your child and support you with the next stages should you so wish. The local authority does not have a statutory duty to monitor the quality of home education, but under section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996 local authorities shall intervene if it appears that parents are not providing a suitable education. It is the intention of the East Riding of Yorkshire Council to support parents to fulfil their duty.

Some Frequently Asked Questions

Does my child need to go to school?

No, it is the duty of parents of every child of compulsory school age “to cause the child to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”

(Education Act 1996 Section 7).

For most children this will be through attendance at school, but for various reasons a small number of parents will take on the responsibility of educating their children themselves. This means they educate their child at home or another location where their learning is directed by the parent or other appropriate adults.

What is compulsory school age?

Compulsory school age is from the beginning of the school term after the fifth birthday until the last Friday in June in the school year in which the sixteenth birthday falls.

What is “efficient” and “suitable” education?

Education can be regarded as “efficient” if it achieves what it sets out to achieve and “suitable” if it prepares the child for life in modern society and enables the child to achieve his/her full potential. It is not necessary to provide the same kind of lessons as school, but it is up to parents/carers to show that the programme of work is helping their child to learn and there is evidence that your child is developing according to his/her age, ability and aptitude.

What if my child has Special Educational Needs?

If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs the local authority has to ensure the child’s needs are being met by reviewing the situation annually; the same review that would have been held in school.

If your child attends mainstream school you can inform the headteacher of your intentions to electively home educate and your child’s name will be removed from the school roll. However if your child attends a special school you must speak to the education welfare service and discuss with them how you will meet your child’s needs.

Do I have to inform the local authority?

Not if your child has not been on a school roll, however, if you are withdrawing your child from a school you must follow the advice in this guidance.

Even if you do not have duty to inform anyone (because your child has not been on a school roll before), you may wish to do so, we can offer useful advice and support throughout your child’s learning.

Do I have to let a local authority officer visit my home?

No, the officer is there for support and to confirm for you that you are meeting your legal requirement in regards to your child’s education. The officer can support you and offer advice and guidance. It may be easier for you to meet at your home as usually this is where you will have the products of your child’s education, but you can arrange to meet elsewhere if this is more appropriate.

You can also send your evidence in the post or by e-mail to the education welfare service. However if after the annual request the service does not receive an update from you, we may consider intervening under Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996 (local authorities shall intervene if it appears that parents are not providing a suitable education).

What is the role of the local authority officer?

It is up to parents to plan their child’s education and to provide books and other materials.

The role of the officer is to support you to provide an “efficient” and “suitable” education so you are fulfilling your legal duty to your child. The officer will provide advice and information if you require it, for example where to obtain Youth Support Service advice regarding further education and careers.

The officer would like to talk to you and your child about the work that is being done. Here are some of the questions you may be asked:-

- How are you planning to ensure your child has a broad and balanced education?
- What are your short-term plans?
- What are your long-term plans?
- How do you provide for your child’s physical development?
- How do you arrange for your child to mix socially with his/her peers?
- How is the work organised?
- Do you include practical activities as well as written work?

- How will you record your child's progress and difficulties?

For older children

- Will your programme allow them access to further or higher education?
- Will your programme give your child a wide range of career opportunities?

These questions are designed to challenge you and stretch the education you are providing, do not worry if you are struggling, the officer will support you to look at how you can develop your teaching and your child's learning.

What do the most successful home educators provide?

- They make the learning process active, practical, participative and hopefully fun.
- They make systematic plans for their child's learning.
- They take full advantage of all available resources, such as museums, libraries, parks, computer, a range of adults, educational video and audio tapes and clubs.
- They encourage their child to read widely.
- They plan a programme of educational visits and broadcasts.
- They provide opportunities for physical development.
- They encourage their child to develop socially with other children and adults.
- They make learning enjoyable by using a variety of approaches.
- They give their child opportunities for independent learning.
- They make sure their child has a quiet area for studying.
- They have a coherent philosophy of education.

Do I have to enter my child for tests and examinations?

No, there is no requirement for you to enter your child for any tests or examinations.

For an older child, you may wish to consider if they need qualifications, for example at GCSE or GNVQ part one. About half of sixteen year olds are expected to gain five or more GCSEs at A-C grades. If they do not get qualifications at 16, it is possible to complete an access course at college to help your child access any future education. Your records of the education you have provided and your child's progress will be very valuable to your child when gaining access to post 16 provision. The education welfare service has guidance for parents regarding examinations.

What is the national curriculum and does it apply to my child?

All maintained schools have to provide an education which

- Is broad and balanced
- Promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at school and of society
- Prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

These are good principles for the home educator as well.

These subjects are taught to pupils aged 5-11

- English (following the national literacy programme from 1998)
- Mathematics (following the national numeracy programme from 1999)
- Science
- Design and technology
- History
- Geography
- Art
- Music
- Physical education
- Religious education
- At age eleven, a modern foreign language is added
- At age fourteen, children start to specialise more and can drop some of the subjects

Your child does not have to follow the National Curriculum when electively home educated. However, the QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) produces many publications, which you may find useful, such as the details of the National Literacy Programme and suggestions for schemes of work. You will have to pay for these publications. Some are available on the Internet. Please see the list of useful resources in the 'Education Welfare Service, Advisory Services and Support Sites for Elective Home Education' guidance.

For your information

In schools a child has regular assessments of their progress. Their achievements are compared with children of similar ages in standard assessment tasks/tests (SATs) and in reading. These assessments help to analyse a child's strengths and weaknesses and support setting targets for further improvement.

- Most seven year olds are expected to achieve Level 2 or above.
- Most eleven year olds are expected to achieve Level 4 or above.
- Most fourteen year olds are expected to achieve Level 5 or above.

What will the local authority do if I am not providing an education?

If this should be the case the local authority officer would write to inform you of this. The letter would explain that unless there was an immediate improvement, East Riding of Yorkshire Council would take steps for your child to return to school. This would be done by serving a school attendance order. This order would inform you which school you should approach to obtain a place for your child. If after a reasonable period of time you have not contacted the school and confirmed a start date this would be done for you by the education welfare service and you will then be informed in writing of your child's school and expected start date. If your child fails to attend on the date specified, then the case will be prepared for the Magistrates' Court where you could face a fine of up to £2,500 per parent and/or imprisonment under the Education Act 1996 (Section 444 1(a)). Please be assured that the main concern of the officer is your child's educational progress and welfare and action will only be taken if it is evident that education is not taking place or there is a serious concern about your child's welfare.

How many other people in the East Riding of Yorkshire home educate their children?

This number varies, but on average 0.5 percent of the East Riding of Yorkshire's compulsory school age children are electively home educated.

What is Flexi-schooling?

Flexi-schooling is when a school agree for your child to go on their school roll to access specific lessons; this is usually to allow children to access equipment that a parent cannot provide. When your child is not in school you would be expected to continue providing the remainder of their education and the local authority would continue to support you with this.

An example would be a child accessing physical education and science at a school and the parent continuing with all other aspects of education.

Flexi-schooling is at the discretion of a school's headteacher and governing body. Any school maintained or independent may accommodate flexi-schooling if it so desires; but there is no obligation to do so and a reason does not have to be given for refusing this request. Fulltime education is an absolute right but flexi-schooling is not and the school can refuse on arbitrary grounds.

Advantages for children:

- Individual tuition from parents and group tuition from school
- Learning from a wide range of environments and resources
- Contact with peers and mixed age groups
- Accommodation of different learning styles including autonomous learning

Advantages for schools:

- Highly motivated children
- Parents taking an active educational role
- Working co-operatively and in partnership with parents
- Cost saving effects for the school, as there are fewer resources required but funding remains the same as for a full time pupil
- Smaller class sizes when the flexi-pupils are not in school

FINALLY – Please think long and hard about electively home educating your child. Taking control of your child's education is a huge responsibility and will take a great deal of your time and energy.

The cost of books, materials, resources, examinations (if required) and educational trips are ordinarily the responsibility of the parent as you are outside the public education system. If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education and health Care Plan, support can be discussed and considered at annual or interim reviews.

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

One of the many benefits of school life is the social interaction between children and young people. You may, therefore, have to make a determined effort to maintain social networks for your child to prevent them from becoming isolated from other children.

Try to resolve any problems at school before taking such a big step. The education welfare service may be able to assist you or help you to find another school more suitable to your child's needs. Sometimes a reduced school timetable can be arranged for a short period of time to support a return to school.

If your concern about school has a religious basis, remember that you have the right to withdraw your child from religious education and collective worship.

If you do decide to educate your child at home, your decision will be respected.

The Local Authority has no statutory duty in relation to monitoring the quality of home education but under Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996, local authorities shall intervene if it appears that parents are not providing a suitable education.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact:

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