



Services for Children and Young People in Buckinghamshire

Buckinghamshire County Council

Guidelines For Parents

Seeking To Educate Their Children At Home



CONTENT	PAGE
Introduction	2
What the law says	3
Duties of parents	
Duties of the Local Authority (LA)	
Educating children with Special Educational Needs at home	
Initial arrangements for your child's education at home	4
What happens if the LA considers the education is not satisfactory	4
Providing an appropriate education at home	5
Learning environment	
Learning environment	
The learning routine	
Educational content	
Other considerations	
The wider world	
Finding resources and support	
a) written materials	
b) local resources	
c) groups that support education otherwise than at school	
The social experience	
The option of formal examinations	8
Part-time employment	9
Protecting your child	9
Making the right decision	9
Conclusion	9
Useful contacts	10
Form for parents to complete – Elective Home Education (EHE)	

Introduction

In most cases parents are happy with their children's education being provided by a school: schools work to a common curriculum framework and are generally successful in supporting the academic progress and personal development of children. Some parents, however, choose to educate their children at home for a variety of reasons. This is a decision not to be taken lightly as it means that parents become responsible for all aspects of their children's education.

These guidelines are intended to provide relevant information and to advise you on how to make the best provision for your child at home, if this is your choice.

What the Law says:

(i) Duties of parents

Section 7 of the Education Act, 1996 says:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable –

- a) to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and*
- b) to any special needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”.*

Whilst this does not mean that the provision must be the same as in a school, the child should be able to make good academic progress and to develop emotionally and socially.

(ii) Duties of the local authority (LA)

If you choose to educate your child at home, the LA's role becomes one of advising and monitoring, with a view to ensuring high standards of education for all children of compulsory school age.

The LA will not direct your child's learning, nor provide equipment, books or other resources. It receives no funding in respect of a child educated otherwise than at school. However, under the terms of Section 437/443 of the Education Act 1996, it is the LA's duty to ensure that the arrangements being made for your child's education are suitable, and to take certain actions if it appears that this is not so.

“If it appears to a 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 on the parent requiring him to satisfy them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education”

The role of the Local Authority extends to Safeguarding – should any professional have reason to believe that a child is suffering or is at the risk of suffering significant harm, they are required by law to inform the appropriate agency.

(iii) Educating children with Special Educational Needs at home

If a child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs and begins home education, the LA's statutory duty to undertake an annual review continues. The review includes assessing whether the Statement is still appropriate. It may be amended or even discontinued depending on the child's current circumstances and the provision being made.

Should it be necessary for the Statement to remain in force, the parents continue to have responsibility for the education provided; however, the LA has a legal duty to ensure that the child's special needs are being met. Should disagreement arise between parents and the LA over the review of an assessment it may need to be resolved by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal.

Parents wishing to begin home education with a child registered at a Special School must seek the consent of the LA in order to withdraw the child from school.

Initial arrangements for your child's education at home

If your child is already enrolled at a mainstream school the first thing you will need to do is to write to the Headteacher formally requesting that his/her name be removed from the school roll. A copy of this letter should be sent to: Education Officer (EHE), Access and Inclusion Team, Buckinghamshire County Council, Floor 3, Walton Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP20 1UZ. If your child is not attending school but is still on the school roll, you would be liable for his/her non-attendance, which could result in court action.

As soon as you have indicated your intention to home educate your child arrangements will be made for an initial visit to your home, by an Education Welfare Officer.

You will need to complete the Elective Home Education form, included with this booklet, outlining your plans. You are asked to provide as much information as you can on the following:

- details of those who will educate the child
- the programme being followed in English, mathematics and other subjects
- the time allocated to teaching different subjects and how this is organised
- the way in which progress is checked and recorded;
- opportunities for recreational and social contact.

When completed this form should be sent to: Education Officer (EHE), Access and Inclusion Team, Buckinghamshire County Council, Floor 3, Walton Street, Aylesbury, Bucks HP20 1UZ, who will share the information provided with the Education Welfare Officer prior to his/her visit.

When your programme of education at home has been under way for a while, an Education Consultant from the LA will request a visit to assess the education your child is receiving. He or she will want to talk to you and your child and would like to see some of the work your child is doing. Visits are conducted in a friendly and purposeful way.

After the visit, the Education Consultant will write to you outlining his or her assessment of whether you are providing an appropriate education for your child. In the majority of cases it is likely to be confirmed that the provision meets the legal requirements for home education.

What happens if the Education Consultant considers the provision is not satisfactory

If the Education Consultant is not satisfied that the educational provision is appropriate, in that it fails to meet the legal requirements, the Education Consultant's concerns will be made known to you in writing and you will be allowed a reasonable time to improve the situation.

At the end of this period, the Education Consultant will visit you again. If the subsequent report says that the provision is now considered satisfactory you will be able to continue educating your child at home. If the LA is still not satisfied, it may consider issuing a Schools Attendance Order (under Section 437 of the Education Act 1996) if it believes a return to school is in the best interests of the child.

Providing an appropriate education

As home educators you are not bound to follow the National Curriculum, nor does your child have to sit examinations, although many parents educating their children at home choose to take up these options. You do not have to observe the same hours, days or terms as schools. You are not obliged to employ a qualified tutor, or tutors, but of course you may do so if you wish.

It is expected, however that the curriculum offered at home will be broad, balanced, relevant and meets the needs of the child. You should ensure that your child has access to a diverse range of subjects, which will develop his/her knowledge, understanding and skills.

The education should be challenging, allowing the child to progress.

The following advice is offered to help you provide an effective, efficient and high-quality education for your child.

Learning Environment

It is not necessary to set up a classroom. However, it is a good idea to identify a suitable location in which your child can work that can be quiet if necessary and which creates the right atmosphere for learning. Space should be available for storage of books, equipment etc. You should also consider appropriate places where messy/practical work can be undertaken.

The Learning Routine

The time allocated to a child's education will depend upon his or her age but, as a general rule, a daily minimum of 3 hours of purposeful and planned educational activity is desirable.

Older children studying for examinations will probably need to study nearer the 25 hours per week that 14 –15 year olds normally spend in school. You should consider the amount of time that will be necessary for your child, in your circumstances.

It is a good idea to establish a routine and you should ensure each day has varied, well-supervised and purposeful active sessions. This is especially important for younger children whose powers of concentration are limited.

Educational Content

Most importantly, the educational programme offered should be appropriate to your child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs he or she may have.

It is particularly important that a well-planned and thorough programme is offered in English (especially reading and writing) and in mathematics, and that the work includes appropriate and sufficient activities to engage, interest and motivate your child.

To be broad and balanced the programme, according to age, should include the development of:-

- language skills e.g. reading, writing, speaking and listening, spelling, handwriting, including writing stories and poems.

- Mathematical skills e.g. number skills, identifying shapes, use of a calculator, interpreting information, applying maths etc.
- Humanities e.g. geographical and historical concepts, knowledge and skills - religious education can be included, not necessarily limited to Christianity. (These subjects are often best taught as a whole topic, rather than in a series of short sessions).
- science, design and technology e.g. developing knowledge and understanding across all areas of science, and the application of these, developing scientific investigation. Practical tasks, designing, making etc. (this could include cookery).
- ICT (information and communication technology) e.g. computer keyboard skills, using computers for research and everyday transactions.
- Creative arts e.g. music, art and craft. Opportunity to use the imagination and develop skills in one or more of these areas is important for a rounded education

Other considerations

The following should also be taken into account when planning the programme for your child:-

- The development of personal qualities and interests and a commitment to a set of personal values.
- The process of integration into the complex culture of a multi-racial society.
- The ability to play an active part in family and community life and to co-operate within a democratic society.
- The knowledge and skills required to prepare for work and contribute to the economy.

Planning your child's work is important and it is useful to develop a clear overview of the programme and establish ways of regularly **assessing the progress** your child is making. You may find it helpful to **record** what is achieved and use these records as a basis for **discussing with your child** his or her progress.

It is also important to be sure that the **materials** (consumable and otherwise) and equipment provided are **age-appropriate, educationally sound and safe**.

The Wider World

As part of their educational and social experience, school often gives children access to museums, places of interest and different environments. You should consider outings and visits as an integral part of the learning process for all areas of the curriculum.

Finding resources and support

a) Written materials

There is nowadays a vast range of materials for teaching and learning that is suitable for home as well as school education. Many such schemes have in-built assessment sections. Some can be found in high street stores; most of the major educational publishers for schools produce their own materials which anyone can order.

Look for attractive layouts, content which requires your child to think for him/herself, to make predictions, and to answer open-ended questions, rather than relying upon a lot of copying and too many short, right or wrong, answers. These exercises have their place and can be fun, but variety in teaching and learning is desirable and effective.

Complete packages for distance learning are popular with some home educators as they do all the planning, checking and assessment for you, as well as providing the necessary resources. They tend, however, to require a high initial outlay.

The Department for Education and Science (DfES) publishes guides to all the subjects of the National Curriculum. They can be downloaded from the internet. Information about examinations can be obtained from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) among others.

(See Useful Contacts on page 10).

b) Local resources

- The library will have an extensive range of books for you and your child. Larger ones also have cassette and video lending facilities and provide access to the internet.
- The Leisure Centre gives you access to facilities and possibly classes/groups aimed at your child's age.
- Local museums/sites of interest, educational in themselves, also sell books and other materials.
- Local evening classes/groups are a good place to access creative facilities but you will need to check whether there is an age restriction.

(c) Groups **that** support elective home education

There are a number of organisations set up, nationally and locally, specifically to provide support for parents and children engaged in home education. They are very popular with home educators, providing comprehensive advice and guidance and resource lists. Social events that bring together children and parents who have home education in common, may be arranged.

(See Useful Contacts on Page 10).

The Social Experience

Whether or not you join such organisations, it is important generally for your child's development that he or she has the chance to mix with other children of all ages and both sexes, not just other family members, on a regular basis.

Membership of a local children or young people's organisation should be considered in order to provide the opportunity for forming relationships in safe and comfortable surroundings. It may also be helpful to consider joining groups for the purpose of developing and expressing any artistic or musical talents.

The option of formal examinations

If you intend your child to undertake examinations to gain qualifications such as the GCSE in one or more subjects, you can arrange for him or her to do so as an external candidate, sitting the examinations in one of the local schools or colleges prepared to make this provision.

Most Adult Education Centres and a variety of colleges provide courses that prepare students who are over 16 for GCSE. The latter is a popular option for some students who are educated at home. Enquiries and applications should be made direct to the relevant centre or college.

Part-time Employment

All children, whether in school or educated at home, who wish to work part-time, or to take part in acting or modelling, are subject to legislation. You must apply to the Local Authority for permission prior to your child doing any work of this kind. Application forms, and full details of what types of work hours are permitted, are available from the Child Employment Officer, Education Welfare Service, County Hall, Walton Street, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP20 1UZ.

Protecting your Child

If you decide to employ a tutor to assist you in educating your child, it is recommended that a parent is present at all times. Ensure that the tutor has good references or is recommended to you by someone you trust.

Making the right decision

There are families who, having elected to home educate their children find it a happy, fulfilling and successful experience. This is not always the case though, and it is important you recognise that the burden of providing an effective education, even for just one child, can be quite heavy. It will always require sustained dedication and commitment.

It can be difficult work too, particularly if you are seeking to provide an education broadly in line with the National Curriculum. It may also be quite costly as parents may feel that it is important to offer access to good books, tuition and equipment. If your child has special educational needs it may be more difficult to get the help he or she needs, for example, by the assessment and help of a trained professional.

Choosing home education is not a 'once and for all' decision, but do think carefully before embarking on this important step.

Conclusion

The LA would generally prefer that you send your child to school. We are always willing to discuss the reasons that prevent you doing this with a view to helping you as much as we can. We do, however, respect your rights and your wishes and we know that most parents do a very good job of educating their child at home.

We wish you and your child every success for the future.