

St. Helens Council
Children and Young People's Services

ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR PARENTS/CARERS

The intention of these guidance notes is to help you understand what may be involved if you are thinking about, or have decided to educate your child at home and out of the school system.

The information relates to the legal position of parents/carers taking on this responsibility in addition to the duties of the Local Authority who must ensure that children educated at home receive an education suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of the child.

Introduction

Elective Home Education is where parents/carers decide to provide education for their children at home instead of sending them to school.

It is **NOT** home tuition provided by a Local Authority or where the Local Authority provides education otherwise than at school.

This means that parents/carers 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" (ie the last Friday in June in the Academic Year in which the child reaches age 16).

Parents/Carers are advised **NOT** to educate their children outside the school system in the following circumstances:

1. as a response to short-term disagreements with the Head Teacher or others at the school, the problem should be talked through with the Head Teacher;
2. as a solution to when a child has not been attending school on some or regularly. It may be even more difficult to provide full-time education for the child at home;
3. as a final or once and for all decision. It may be possible to manage education at home at primary level but the situation can be very difficult at 16 and when there is a need to study for GCSE, especially in subjects that have a major practical element.

If parents/carers do decide to educate their child at home, they are accepting full responsibility for their education.

Therefore before making a decision to educate at home parents/carers should:

1. consider all the issues very seriously. It is a great responsibility and a considerable commitment of time and energy;
2. plan what is intended to do with the child before making a decision;
3. consider the costs involved;

4. be aware that the child may miss the social side of school, contact with other children, joint school activities and the impetus which comes from seeing other children's work;
5. be aware that the Local Authority's role is simply to monitor the suitability of the education provided. There are no Local Authority grants available to help with education at home, costs of materials, equipment, examination fees etc will be borne by parent/carers.

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK

Does my child have to go to school?

By law, all children of compulsory school age (aged 5 to 16) must receive a suitable education. Parents/carers are responsible for making sure this happens, either by registering the child at a school or by arranging an effective alternative to school.

What is a parent's duty?

The responsibility of parents/carers is clearly established in Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 which provides that:

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

1. to his/her ability and aptitude, and
2. to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Can you explain what this means?

Compulsory school age:

All children who are 16 on or after 1st September in Year 11 may leave on the last Friday of the following June.

At the other end of the spectrum, children must be educated from the age of five, although parents/carers cannot be required either to admit the child to a school or educate otherwise until the beginning of the term after their fifth birthday.

Efficient suitable education:

An "efficient" and "suitable" education is not defined in the Education Act 1996 but "efficient" has been broadly described as an education that "achieves that which it sets out to achieve", and a "suitable" education is one that "primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he is a member, rather than the way of life in the country as a whole, as long as it does not foreclose the child's options in later years to adopt some other form of life if he wishes to do so."

It is recognised that there are many approaches to educational provision and what is suitable for one child may not be for another.

Full-time:

There is no legal definition of "full-time" education. In providing full-time education Local Authorities look to DfES Circulars 7/90 and 11/99 as to the number of hours

recommended for pupils at each Key Stage (KS). Neither Circular imposes any statutory requirements on LAs, but provides guidance only.

The recommended minimum hours per week of taught time are as follows:

Age 5-7	KS1 (Years 1-2)	: 21 hours
Age 7-11	KS2 (Years 3-6)	: 23.5 hours
Age 11-15	KS3 (Years 7-9)/KS4 (Year 10)	: 24 hours
Age 16	KS4 (Year 11)	: 25 hours

Children in state maintained schools attend for 380 sessions (190 days) in an academic year.

Regular attendance at school:

If a child is registered on a school roll they must attend regularly or their parents/carers, subject to certain defences, are guilty of an offence.

Or otherwise:

This is not defined in law but would include being taught at home by parents/carers including the use of correspondence courses or by private tutors.

Special educational needs:

Children with special educational needs (SEN) are defined as having a learning difficulty that calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

A learning difficulty is defined with regard to children over 5 as:

1. a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his/her age;
2. a disability that either prevents or hinders a child from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children at his/her age in schools within the area of the Local Authority.

Parents/carers' right to educate their child at home applies equally when a child has special educational needs. Some children with special educational needs are statemented but others are not.

When a child has a statement of special educational needs and is educated at home, it remains the Local Authority's duty to ensure that the child's needs are being met.

The statement remains in force and the Local Authority must ensure that parents/carers are able to make suitable provision including provision for the child's SEN.

If the parent/carer's arrangements are suitable, the Local Authority is relieved of its duty to arrange the provision specified in the statement. However if the provision provided by parents/carers is failing to meet the child's needs and they are not therefore making "suitable arrangements" and the Local Authority could not conclude that they were absolved of their responsibility to arrange the provision in the statement.

If the Local Authority is satisfied with the provision being made it remains under a duty to maintain the statement and review it annually following procedures set out in the SEN Code of Practice.

Where the Local Authority is satisfied that suitable arrangements are in place it does not have to name a school in the statement though it should state the type of school

it considers appropriate and then go onto state that “parents have made their own arrangements under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996.”

How do I go about it ?

Where the child is registered at a school, parents/carers have a responsibility to inform the school **in writing** that they are withdrawing their child in order to educate at home.

Parents/carers are not legally obliged to notify the Local Authority of their intentions. However it is recommended that they do so as soon as possible in order to avoid unsettling the child unnecessarily and to ensure that support and advice can be offered as required or as requested.

How does the Local Authority propose to make sure that the provision is satisfactory ?

After informing the Local Authority of your intention to educate at home, a member of the Achievement and Inclusion Team, usually an Adviser, will contact you to arrange a convenient time to visit and discuss the arrangements you are making for your child's education.

They will ask you to give us an idea of your plans on the Proposal Form as this will provide you with guidance and will form the basis of the discussion with the Adviser.

The Adviser will discuss with you the proposed programme of work and it will need to be detailed but it is not intended to be frightening in any way and the Local Authority does have a duty to ensure that evidence is provided.

A report will be written up after the visit and a copy sent to you, any comments you make will be kept on file by the Local Authority.

You need to be aware that the Adviser will be unable to direct the learning taking place nor can they or the Local Authority accept any responsibility for the educational success or otherwise of your child.

If you decide to educate at home it is your responsibility to plan your child's education and to carry it out.

What kind of evidence will be helpful to the Adviser ?

A written programme of work will be a starting point for discussion and examples of you child's work will be a useful indication of progress as well as the current position.

The type of question the Adviser may ask could include the following:

- How are you planning to ensure that your child receives a broad balanced curriculum?
- Have you a programme of work for the whole of the year? How does this relate to what you have planned in the near future?
- Have you thought how subject topics might link together?
- Have you planned a variety of work so that your child does practical work as well as written tasks?
- Who or what will you use to assist you?

- In what ways will you record your child's progress or difficulties?
- How will you determine how successful you are?

You should try to arrange the programme so that access to Further / Higher Education would be possible and that a wide range of career opportunities would be open.

How should I organize the teaching and learning ?

A curriculum should be broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated and consist of everything that is done to educate your child. It should cater for your child's physical, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual development.

Broad: It should introduce the pupil to a wide range of knowledge, understanding and skills.

Balanced: Each part of your programme should be allocated sufficient time to make it a special contribution but not so much that it squeezes out other essential parts of the programme.

Relevant: Subjects should be taught to bring out their application to the child's own experiences and future adult life and give due emphasis to practical aspects.

Differentiated: What is taught and how it is taught needs to match the child's ability and aptitude.

A good curriculum will include personal, social and health education and outdoor and environmental education.

The opportunity to mix and relate with other children in work and play away from the family home is very important.

What about the National Curriculum ?

Children educated at home are not legally required to follow the National Curriculum.

National Curriculum tests and assessment arrangements are developed and administered by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) on behalf of the Secretary of State. Information to support these arrangements is provided both electronically and in hard copy via the QCA's website at www.qca.org.uk or by telephoning their publications office on 01787 884 444.

In addition the DfE website at www.dfes.gov.uk allows access to the National Curriculum and associated schemes of work aimed at setting standards across all schools.

Some documents are distributed via Departmental publications and can be accessed through links on The Stationery Office website at www.the-stationery-office.co.uk or by telephoning 0845 602 2260.

There are a number of reasons why you should take account of the National Curriculum.

- your child is legally entitled to the National Curriculum while they are on the roll of a school;
- you may wish your child to enter or re-enter the state system at a later date at school, college or university and integration will be easier if you have followed the National Curriculum;
- when your child is seeking employment levels of attainment in the area of National Curriculum will be of considerable importance.

How will I know if what I am doing is acceptable to the Local Authority ?

There will be oral feedback from the Adviser on each visit followed up by a written report.

This will give you an indication of whether the educational provision is suitable and may also include areas for consideration and improvement and detail appropriate recommendations.

What happens if the Local Authority is not satisfied with the provision I have made ?

You will be kept fully informed of any areas of your child's education that are causing concern.

The Local Authority will give you a reasonable amount of time to improve the situation and arrange a further visit with you.

If we are still not satisfied we will explain to you the reason(s) why and pointing out the action you need to take to rectify the situation.

The Local Authority may decide to issue a School Attendance Order under Section 437 of the Education Act 1996 requiring your child to attend a named school in order to receive efficient full-time education. Failure to comply with such an order would be an offence.

The Local Authority would do all it could to prevent such a course of action being taken.

However in the interest of your child this is the responsibility placed on the Local Authority by a variety of Education Acts and the necessity to fulfil this responsibility in the interests of the educational development of your child.

How often will the Local Authority check the provision being provided ?

The Local Authority will wish to establish a good working relationship with you and as soon as we receive the information about your intention to educate at home we will arrange a visit as soon as possible.

An Adviser will visit you once each academic year to look at the provision you are providing although more frequent visits may be arranged depending on the suitability of that provision.

In addition an Education Welfare Officer may visit once a term to ensure that the Local Authority is meeting its obligations in respect of safeguarding and child protection.

Some final thoughts for your consideration.

The decision to educate your child at home is a major step and will involve a considerable commitment in time and energy.

Please think long and hard about this commitment, talk and listen to your child, plan what you intend to do before finally deciding and investigate the financial cost.

You will need to consider the social side of your child growing up, contact with other children, joint activities and the stimulus of seeing other children's work are real benefits in school life and will aid the social development of individual children.

Do remember if you wish your child to enter the school system, this has the advantage of allowing specialist teaching, preparation for examinations and may overcome any problems in parental ability in some areas of education. If the National Curriculum has not been followed this might cause problems upon entering the school system as well as being difficult socially.

The Local Authority's Admissions Team will be happy to help you find a place at a St. Helens school.

Finally.

Parents who decide to educate at home can find it a happy and constructive experience but this is not always the case. It is an enormous undertaking.

If you do decide to educate at home the Local Authority will do what it can to try to ensure that efficient and suitable education is provided.

Please help us to establish and maintain a good and positive working partnership.