

ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

Information Leaflet



**Vale of Glamorgan Pupil Support
Service**

INTRODUCTION

You have decided on, or are considering the option of educating your child, or children, at home. It is hoped that this booklet will be helpful to you. The information which follows will answer some of your questions and explain to you the policy and practice of the Vale of Glamorgan LEA in such cases.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the Specialist Teacher responsible for Home Education at:

Pupil Support Service,
Provincial House,
Kendrick Road,
Barry,
CF62 8UF.
Telephone number: 01446 709 180.

The law states that all parents have a duty to ensure that their children receive an efficient, full time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise (*under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996*). The law allows parents to educate their children at home instead of sending them to school, if they fulfil certain conditions. In most cases parents are happy with their children's education being provided by a school. Occasionally, parents prefer to arrange their child's education "otherwise" than at school. Parents who educate their children at home may do so for a number of reasons, possibly based on firm convictions about education. Parents will find the following guidelines useful when considering educating their children at home.

When a parent decides to withdraw their child from school in order to home educate, they should notify the school, in writing, where the child is registered. (The reason for this is that 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.) The school will then remove the child from their register and inform the local education authority (LEA). Parents are not legally required to inform their LEA but by doing so this ensures that the LEA is aware of the change. Additionally, it is recommended that parents inform their LEA of a change of address, or any other significant changes in their circumstances relevant to the effective education of their child.

The Responsibilities of the LEA

The LEA needs to be satisfied that a child is receiving suitable education at home, and the specialist teacher responsible will ask to meet with the family in order to talk to the parent and to look at examples of work and learning. LEAs have no automatic right of access to a parent's home. Parents may, if they wish to, permit access to their home, or request an alternative venue for a meeting. At the initial meeting, the nature and frequency of future contact will be agreed.

Alternatively parents may wish to provide information that an appropriate education is being provided, in another form, such as a written report.

Where it appears to an LEA that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving efficient or suitable full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, the LEA is under a duty to serve a notice on the parent requiring them to satisfy the authority that their child is receiving suitable education "otherwise than at school". If the parent's reply is unsatisfactory, or if they fail to reply, the LEA may issue a School Attendance Order (under section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996). LEAs may also apply to the Court for a child assessment under the Children Act 1989, if they have reasonable cause to do so.

Schools have a very important role in monitoring the wellbeing of their pupils and sharing concern with, or making referrals to Children and Young People Services when a child is believed to be 'in need' or 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 LEA will share this information with Children and Young People Services. This information will be retained on the local authority database, however no further action will be taken unless additional information is received indicating Social Services involvement is required, and this decision will then be reviewed.

Additionally should you want to discuss with a Social Services representative the support that may be available from your local authority social services department then please contact the Duty Officer for the Vale of Glamorgan Children and Young People Services Division based at Haydock House telephone number 01446 7252202.

Likewise, because certain health services are accessed by being on a school roll, the Health service is informed of each child being educated at home.

Health Services Available to School Age Children:

Every child attending school has access to a named school nurse who offers health, advice and support to the child and family. On entry to school the child is seen for a health review which includes height, weight, vision and audiology screening this identifies any unmet health needs and ensures that they are appropriately addressed.

The home educated child is able to access the service by contacting the school nurse coordinator based at Riverside Health Centre, Wellington Street, Cardiff telephone: 02920371221.

Children with Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Children and young people with statements of special educational needs can be home educated. When a child has a statement of special educational needs which names a special school, the child's name may **not** be removed from the register of that school without the consent of the education authority.

De-registration from School

If the child is currently or has previously been educated at a maintained school and parents wish to withdraw them to home educate, it is essential that the parents inform the school in writing so that the child's name can be removed from the register. A Unique Pupil Number (UPN) will have been allocated for the child and it is important therefore for the school and LEA to be aware of any changes in case the child returns to schooling in future.

If the child has never attended school they will not have been allocated a UPN and although there is no statutory requirement for home-educating parents to register their child with LEAs, they are strongly encouraged to do so where possible as this will enable the LEA to carry out their duties and responsibilities in a straightforward and helpful way.

Costs of Home Educating

Home educating need not be expensive, but parents are strongly encouraged to plan ahead and think carefully about the costs associated with educating children at home (especially in the longer term when they may wish to take public examinations).

Once a child is removed from the school register the financial responsibility for educating

that child rests solely on the parent. There are no grants or funds available from the LEA to support home education. If a parent subsequently wishes their child to return to school then an application should be made through the Schools Admissions Section (01446 709725). It should be noted that re-admission is not automatic and is dependent on places being available in the specific year group.

The internal assessment component of many standard qualification courses such as Standard Grades, National Qualifications and GCSEs can restrict the choice available to home educated students. On the other hand, the examining board “Edexcel” has made their International GCSEs (with coursework-free option) available to home-educated children from 2004 and there may be other options available through local colleges.

Frequently Asked Questions about Elective Home Education

Is it legal? Yes. Home-Education is legal in all parts of the UK. You do not need to be a teacher or have any other special qualifications.

How do I start? If your child is pre-school age and has never been to school, there is no action for you to take prior to starting home education – though it would help us if you did inform us that you are intending to educate your child, together with your details. If your child is in school you must formally de-register by writing to the head teacher and say that you intend to teach your child at home.

What happens when I withdraw my child from school? The LEA will write to you offering an informal visit by the specialist teacher. If you would like to provide evidence in some other form than by a home visit then you are able to do so at this time. If you refuse to respond to their informal questions LEAs are permitted under case law to assume that you are failing to provide any education and ultimately issue a School Attendance Order (which will force you to return your child to school). You may challenge the Order in court by providing evidence that proper educational provision is being made.

Can I home educate a child with a Special Needs Statement? Yes. There is no law prohibiting the home education of statemented children provided they are not attending a special school, in which case you will need the consent of the LEA. However, you need to be able to show that you can provide for these special needs should the LEA enquire.

What if my child is in a special school? If your child has special needs and attends a special school, you do need permission from the local education authority to de-register and ensure you can otherwise cater for his or her special needs.

How does compulsory school age affect home educators? As a parent, you must provide an education for your child during "compulsory school age" (age 5 to 16). The law says that this can be at home.

What is the parent's actual duty? The Education Act 1996 says that it is the parents' duty:

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".

Will I be checked or monitored in any way? The LEA has a duty to ensure that you are providing efficient and suitable education for your child. Some parents whose children have never been to school or have moved home since leaving school are unknown to their LEA and therefore have no monitoring. However, the Vale of Glamorgan Local Education Authority believes that positive relationships and mutual respect between the LEA and parents are the best way of ensuring that the best interests of the child are safeguarded. As such, you will be offered regular visits, either termly or six monthly, which are intended to be supportive in nature. You are under no obligation to accept these offers of visits and you will be given the opportunity to submit evidence, in some other form, that you are providing an education suitable to your child's "age, ability and aptitude", and to any special educational needs he or she may have.

The specialist teacher will not tell you how to educate your child. It is your responsibility to plan and carry out your child's educational experience.

Do I have to teach the National Curriculum? The National Curriculum only applies to state schools. As a home educator it is up to you and your child what, how and when you study.

There is no one form of education; children learn in many ways, at different rates and from a range of people. Education does not always have to follow a set pattern of “lessons” or even a timetable. However, it is good to identify your long term plans and the ways in which you intend to achieve them.

What is “efficient” and “suitable” education? Education can be said to be “efficient” if it achieves what it sets out to achieve and “suitable” if it prepares a child for taking his / her place in society and also that opportunities provided enable them to achieve their full potential.

What is “full-time” education? The length of time is not specified but “full-time” education in school means that children spend between 23 and 25 hours on work each week, according to age. Children attending LEA schools do so for 38 weeks a year.

What would be seen as a good curriculum?

- **Broad:** It should introduce the pupils to a wide range of knowledge, understanding and skills.
- **Balanced:** Each part should be allotted sufficient time to make its special contribution but not such that it pushes out other essential parts of the learning.
- **Relevant:** Subjects should be taught so as to bring out their application to the pupil's own experience and to adult life and to give due emphasis to practical aspects.
- **Differentiated:** What is taught, and how it is taught needs to be matched to the child's abilities and aptitude. It should also be sufficiently challenging so that a child can show that some progress is being made.

A good curriculum also includes other aspects at an appropriate level such as personal and social education, health education, outdoor and environmental education, citizenship, careers education, food technology and information and communication technology (ICT).

Opportunities to mix and relate with other children and adults are considered to be important to a child's personal and social development.

The Vale of Glamorgan LEA encourages a range of teaching and learning methods, but these can be adapted to suit the individual needs of your child. These might include a

variety of independent and group learning styles such as:

- Active learning
- Collaborative work in groups
- Problem solving and decision making skills
- Teamwork skills

Can my child still take exams? Yes, you can arrange for children to take exams as external candidates at various exam centres such as colleges of further education. You will need to contact colleges and make enquiries and talk to other home educators in your area. However, there are no grants available to cover the costs.

What is “flexi-schooling”? This is an arrangement between the parent and the school where the child is registered at school in the normal way but where the child attends the school only part time; the rest of the time the child is home-educated. "Flexi-schooling" is a legal option but you will need the agreement of the head teacher at the school concerned and, in most cases, the local education authority as well. Some of the advantages and disadvantages of "flexi-schooling" are referred to on the Home Education UK's website at www.home-education.org.uk/flexi-school.htm.

Further Information

The 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 through QCA's website at www.qca.org.uk and their address QCA, 83 Piccadilly, London W1J 8QA, telephone 0207 509 555.

In Wales, information is available on the Welsh Assembly website at <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en>. Information on primary and secondary curriculum and assessment is available through the “Curriculum and Assessment” link.

You may also be interested in looking at GCSE at www.dfes.gov.uk/qualifications/mainSection.cfm?sld=1 This site provides information about qualifications for schools and colleges.

The Careers Wales Service is for all children and young people aged 13-19 living in England, and its services and responsibilities cover children and young people who are being educated at home. Information is available on their website at www.careerswales.com/

Curriculum online (www.curriculumonline.gov.uk) gives pupils, parents and teachers access to thousands of resources and online activities relevant to Key Stage 1 & 2, Special Needs and Early Years.

Information on home education can also be found on the Parents Centre website at www.parentcentre.gov.uk

Some documents are also distributed by the Department's publications centre which can be accessed through links on The Stationery Office website at www.the-stationery-office.co.uk or by telephoning Prolog on 0845 602 2260. Some documents are priced so parents will need to check the costs with Prolog before ordering.

Parents with younger children may also find it helpful to access a website about "Digger and the Gang" www.bbc.co.uk/education/schools/digger.

This website is for 5 – 11 year olds and aims to help children find out more about the ideas behind the National Curriculum, and how different parts of the National Curriculum work together to fit into the greater scheme of things.

Parents can also find other links on the BBC websites the addresses are www.bbc.co.uk/learning/index.shtml & www.bbc.co.uk/schools/index.shtml

Independent organisations that deal with issues surrounding Home Education

Education Otherwise is a UK-based membership organisation which provides support and information for families whose children are being educated outside school, and for those who wish to uphold the freedom of families to take proper responsibility for the education of their children. Contact:

Education Otherwise

PO Box 325,

Kings Lynn,

PE34 3XW

Website: www.education-otherwise.org.uk

Local Contact for Glamorgan and Gwent:

Louise Murray 01443 231 362

leueeze@aol.com

Membership costs £25 per year and includes a quarterly newsletter with details of resources, get-togethers, updates on the legal and political situation and personal stories as well as the Education Otherwise Handbook, membership card entitling various discounts, truancy card and car sticker.

South Wales Home Educators Network (SWEN)

For local information by post send an A4 sae to:

SWHEN

31 Coed Yr Esgob

Llantrisant

Mid Glamorgan CF72 8EL

www.swhen.netfirms.com for information, e-mail support list, details of activities and events.

Home Education Advisory Service is a national home education charity based in the United Kingdom. It is dedicated to the provision of advice and practical support for families who wish to educate their children at home in preference to sending them to school. Interest in home education is increasing and HEAS recognises that reliable information should be available for everyone. Contact:

Home Education Advisory Service, PO Box 98, Welwyn Garden City

Hertfordshire, AL8 6AN

Tel: 01707 371 854

Website: www.heas.org.uk

Suggested Reading List for Home Educators

The following books are available from www.amazon.co.uk

1) Free Range Education: How Home Education Works

Edited – Terri Dowty

Published by Hawthorn Press

2) Educating Children at Home

Alan Thomas

Published by Continuum International Publishing

3) Home Learning Year by Year: How to Design a Homeschool Curriculum from Preschool through High School

Rebecca Rupp

4) Teach Your Own – The John Holt Book of Home Schooling

John Holt & Pat Farenga

Published by Perseus Books

5) Doing it their way – Home Based Education and Autonomous Learning

Jan Fortune-Wood

Published by Educational Heretics Press

6) One-to-One: A Practical Guide to Learning at Home Age 0 – 11

Gareth Lewis (and family)

Published by Nezert Books

7) Unqualified Education: A Practical Guide to Learning at Home Age 11 – 18

Gareth Lewis (and family)

Published by Nezert Books

8) Learning all the Time

John Holt

Published by Perseus Publishing