



City of Westminster
Children's Services

ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS

September 2009

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GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS

The PARENTAL GUIDANCE provides information and advice to parents and carers on how to proceed, what to consider and who to contact for further information and advice.

The GUIDANCE will be reviewed regularly with the input of home educators.

In Westminster, the Education Welfare Service carries out the duties of the Local Authority (LA) regarding Elective Home Education (EHE).

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the Education Welfare Service:

Education Welfare Service
1st Floor
4 Frampton Street
London NW8 8EA
Phone no: 020 7641 7580

Home educating families may also wish to contact any of the organisations listed at the end of this document for further advice and support.

You may already be a home educator, with established ideas about an approach that works for your family or may be considering home educating your children for the first time. In either case we hope you will find the following information helpful. Alternatively the websites and organisations listed at the end of this guidance provide information that answers many frequently asked questions.

Westminster City Council (WCC) aims 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.

We are aware that there is no legal obligation on LAs or home educators to develop working relationships and that home educating families may prefer not to have a working relationship with the LA.

1. How do I start Home Educating?

1.1 *Children not registered at school*

If your child is of pre – school age, or attending an Independent school or between schools there is no legal obligation for you to inform the local authority.

1.2 *Children registered at a state school*

If your child is at a state school you will need to inform the Head teacher in writing of your intention to deregister your child in order to home educate. Sample letters are available¹

1.3 *Children registered at a special school*

If your child is registered at a special school, then you will need to deregister in writing to the head teacher as with a state school. The school will then contact the LA to inform them of your intention to commence home education. You can also contact the LA directly. A sample letter is attached for your information.

1.4 *Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)*

Many people home educate special needs children. You may ask the local authority to carry out a statutory assessment or reassessment of your child's special educational needs and the local authority must consider the request within the same statutory timescales as for all other requests.

The local authority has a duty to maintain the statement, review it annually, and arrange the provision specified, unless you have made suitable provision for education.

It may become appropriate to cease maintaining the statement if the child's needs are being met without additional support from the LA.

2. Provision of a Suitable Education

Home Educating Parents are required to provide an efficient, full-time education suitable to the age, ability and aptitude and SEN of the child.

There is no legal definition of “full-time” Children normally attend school for between 22 and 25 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year, but this measure of “contact time” is not relevant to elective home education. There is often almost continuous one to one contact and education may take place outside normal “school hours”.

¹ www.educationotherwise.org

An “**efficient**” and “**suitable**” education is not defined in the Education Act 1996 but “efficient” has been broadly described in case law² as:

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.”

2.1 Home educating parents are NOT required to

- Teach the National Curriculum
- Provide a broad and balanced education
- Have a timetable
- Have premises equipped to any particular standard
- Set hours during which education will take place
- Have any specific qualifications
- Make detailed plans in advance
- Observe school hours, days or terms
- Give formal lessons
- Mark work done by their child
- Formally assess progress or set developmental objectives
- Reproduce school type peer group socialisation
- Match school based age specific standards

3. Choosing What to Learn

Children learn in many ways and all home educating families vary in their approach. You do not need to be a trained teacher or have any particular qualifications or experience to home educate your children. Parents of all educational, social, racial, religious and ethnic backgrounds successfully educate children outside the school setting.

Some families choose to follow a structured ‘school at home’ adult led approach. Other families choose a semi-structured approach to learning, which involves focus on key subjects. Other families may choose an autonomous approach to learning, which allows the children to follow their own interests entirely while parents provide support and encouragement.

Many parents adopt an eclectic approach and mix and match methods, taking into account their child’s character, personality and preferred way of learning.

More advice on learning methods can be obtained from:

www.education-otherwise.org.uk

² Mr Justice Woolf in the case of R v Secretary of State for Education and Science, ex parte Talmud Torah Machzkei Hadass School Trust (12 April 1985)

4. Advice on GCSEs

Home educated children do not have to sit any Standard Attainment Tests (SAT)s 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 try to sort out a centre that, for a fee will allow your child to sit their exams there, such as a school or college.

If you already have a positive relationship with a school or college you may wish to ask if your child could be entered there for the exams.

If you do not have any relationship or contact with a school or college you will need to contact an examinations board, which should be able to arrange a local centre on your behalf.

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 small fee.

GCSE's usually take two years to study in a school but home educators often complete them in one year.

5. Employing a Tutor

Some parents may wish to employ a qualified tutor to work with their child. The local authority recommends that you check their qualifications and whether they have a recent Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check in order to safeguard your child. A CRB check will ensure that you are not employing anyone who has a previous record of offences which might make them unsuitable to work with children.

The majority of tutors and other professionals will have no objection to this and will usually offer this without being asked.

6. Some things you may wish to consider

- Home educating requires time, commitment and energy but can be very rewarding.
- Contact with other home educating parents may provide you with support and advice.
- Organisations such as 'Education Otherwise' can be helpful. They are a charity which support and provide information to home educators. They can also help you with making contact with other home educating families if you desire.
www.education-otherwise.org.uk

- 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 you. Westminster and central London have a plethora of museums, galleries, parks etc which can offer stimulating and rewarding experiences if enjoyed by the child.
- Being flexible and open to change could be advantageous as your child's needs may change at different ages and stages.
- If you find your child doesn't enjoy a particular learning style you can adapt it by varying the style and content, and the processes it involves.
- If following a more structured learning method, the opportunity for independent study and research, and providing a quiet area for sustained study/work can be helpful if desired by the child.
- 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. Children can learn a huge amount from everyday experiences and projects that cost very little. What works varies from family to family and there is an abundance of free museums and resources available to enhance the learning experience.

7. School Attendance Orders

Westminster LA aims to cooperate and communicate with parents and will only issue a SAO as a last resort and after all reasonable steps have been taken to resolve the situation informally (see LA policy for full details of the process)

8. What Westminster LA will provide to Home Educators

The Educational Welfare department will provide a first point of contact in the LA for parents who want additional information relating to EHE. The officer responsible for EHE is Richie Adeyeye and can be contacted on 020 7641 7616.

This person will offer information and advice on matters related to EHE. We will continue to meet with local home educators who will be able to have input into these areas.

Where there is a complaint, in the first instance this will be dealt with by the named officer above. However, where the complaint is not resolved this will be taken up by the Principal Education Welfare Officer.

Westminster LA can also assist if you wish your child to return to school at any time. If you need assistance with this please contact the Admissions Team on 0207 641 1816.

9. APPENDIX 1

Useful Resources

Disclaimer: Westminster City Council does not make any recommendations or give any assurances about the suitability, quality or otherwise of the services provided by the organisations/bodies listed in this document.

NATIONAL SUPPORT

Education Everywhere

www.educationeverywhere.co.uk

Tel 01942 897 779

An information sharing service, based primarily upon a Helpline, staffed by experienced volunteers who can discuss general questions about home education, or specific issues, or try to help in time of crisis.

Education Otherwise (EO)

www.education-otherwise.org

PO Box 325, Kings Lynn, PE34 3XW

Tel 0870 730 0074

email: eoemailhelpline@education-otherwise.org

The largest home education membership organisation in the UK. Local support networks; information and support for special educational needs, school-induced anxiety, etc; newsletter; contact list; publications; list of museums and facilities offering reduced rates to members.

Home Education Advisory Service (HEAS)

www.heas.org.uk

PO Box 98, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL8 6AN

Tel 00707 371 854

Support organisation for UK home educators, quarterly bulletin, advice line, handbook of home education and leaflets

Home Education UK Website

www.home-education.org.uk

Not a support or membership organisation, but a website set up and run by Mike Fortune-Wood, a home educator and author of various books on home education. Website contains information about home education and issues relating to home education, and many links to additional information.

INTERNET SUPPORT LISTS

eoyahoo

Education Otherwise (EO) runs a general list:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/eo>

List open to members and non-members

He-UK

www.home-education.org.uk/members.htm

Membership list for the Home Education UK website. The largest independent list with nearly 1000 members.

UK Home Ed

LISTSERV@LISTSERV.AOL.COM

The most long-established support list for home educators, it has members from across the UK and across the spectrum of styles of home education. Open debate.

HE Special

www.he-special.org.uk

A list for home educating families with children with special needs

THENUK

<http://www.thenuk.com/>

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Then_Uk/?yguid=85558917

Support/membership group.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXAMINATIONS

GCSEs

GCSE / external exams etc info

www.home-education-exams.org.uk

HE-Exams-GCSEs_alternatives_others-subscribe@yahoo.com

List to share information, resources and experience for home educating families who wish to take GCSEs or are considering other qualifications.

AQA

www.aqa.org.uk/index.php

Edexcel

www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/Pages/default.aspx

OCR

www.ocr.org.uk

IGCSEs (International General Certificate of Secondary Education)

Cambridge IGCSE

<http://www.cie.org.uk/qualifications/academic/middlesec/igcse/subjects>

Edexcel

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/igcse/igcse09/Pages/default.aspx>

Open University

Upon application and interview, home educated children under 16 may be accepted to take Open University courses.

<http://www.open.ac.uk>

National Extension College (NEC)

http://www.nec.ac.uk/info/?usca_p=t

Provides open learning through its correspondence college. Offers GCSE, IGCSE and A level course, tutors, handbooks, technical guides and practical guides.

Open and Distance Learning Quality Council (formerly Council for the Accreditation of Correspondence Colleges)

<http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/odlqc/index.htm>

tel: 020 7612 7090

email: info@odlqc.org.uk

Provides accreditation to correspondence colleges and an advisory service on correspondence education. Provides a list of Providers of correspondence courses.

Oxford Home Schooling

www.oxfordhomeschooling.co.uk

tel: 0800 0 111 024

A division of Oxford Open Learning geared for home educating families.

London Art College

www.londonartcollege.co.uk/b1learntodraw/B1-learn-to-draw-course2.htm

Home Education in the UK

Among other courses, offers a "Learn to Draw" course suitable for home-educated children ages 7 and up.

SPECIALIST GROUPS, SUPPORT LISTS AND WEBSITES

Choice in Education

www.educationchoice.org.uk

An independent home education bi-monthly newsletter edited by a different HE family each issue.

PO Box 20284

London, NW1 3WY

Tel: 020 896 0893

Home Education in the UK

www.home-ed.info

Growing resource of home education information, resources, ideas and articles for anyone considering or starting home education.

Special Needs

SpEARHead (Special Education at Home)

tel 0161 799 7244

email advice.spearhead@lineone.net

SpEARHead was established to provide information and advice to parents about the legal right to home education their children with special educational needs and disabilities. It is an independent advice organisation, independent of government, local authorities and other organisations

Single parents

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/EO-Single-Parent> (or send an email to EO-Single-Parent-subscribe@yahoogroups.com) Need not be an EO member to join this EO list.

Gifted children

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/gifted-home-ed-uk>

A group to share ideas, recommend resources, and provide support with discussion open to all aspects of home educating gifted children in the UK.

Flexi-schooling

www.flexitimeschooling.org

Kate Oliver, 21 St Marys Crescent, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire DV31 1JL

tel 09296 437 332 (after 8:30 pm only)

Home educator who arranged part-time state schooling to complement home education. Information pack available as a download free from the internet (see web address above) or by sending 10-2nd class stamps to cover printing and postage to the postal address above.

Black and other UK Home Educators

<http://www.blackandotherukhomeducators.tk>

email: info@blackandotherukhomeeducators.tk

tel: 07960491963

First black home education website in the UK, with ideas, resources and information and support for families educating their children outside of school.

Christian Home Education

Home Service

www.home-service.org

48 Heaton Moor Road, Heaton Moor, Stockport SK4 4NX

tel: 0161 432 3782

email: ruth@home-service.org

Established in 1992 to support Christian home educators.

Christian Education Europe

www.christian-education.org

Maranatha House, Unit 5, Northford Close, Shivenham SN6 8HL

tel: 01793 783 783

email: info@christian-education.org

Supply Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) material. Also operate a National Christian College, providing support, curriculum material and conferences.

Christian Home Education

www.homeschool.co.uk

Tips and resources for Christian home schooling, home education information, articles, resource and suggested reading, for Christian home schoolers in the UK, Australia and South Africa.

Islamic Home Education

Home Educators and UK Muslims

Contact through: <http://welovehomeed2.blogspot.com/>

email: homeedmythree@hotmail.com

This is a forum where Muslim home educators in the UK can support each other and discuss issues connected to home ed. The intention is to generate a base where ideas/resources can be shared. These resources include ideas and activities with an Islamic aspect for family activities/community and global issues.

IHSAN, Islamic Home Schooling Advisory Service

<http://islamichomeeducation.co.uk/home.htm>

PO Box 30671, London E1 0TG

email: info@islamichomeeducation.co.uk

Aims include to assist and support Muslim parents who are home educating or seeking other educational alternatives for children; provide information about rights and responsibilities when home schooling, and about educational resources to support Islamic education, values and beliefs.

Lists:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/muslimsandhomeeducation/>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/homeeducatorsandukmuslims/>

Non-UK-based lists:

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Muslim_Homeschool/
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MuslimHomeEducators/>
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/muslimhomeschoolers/>
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SalafiEducation/>
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/cnjhomeschoolers/>
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MECAH/>
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MNMMuslimHomeschoolers/>

Jewish Home Education

Jewish Home Educators' Network

www.snj.com/jhen/

(American) JHEN is a quarterly newsletter with articles, letters from readers, recipes, holiday and craft ideas, book reviews, a Jewish calendar of information and ideas, and help columns.

GENERAL SUPPORT, NOT SPECIFICALLY HOME EDUCATION

Action for Rights for Children (ARCH)

www.arch-ed.org

tel: 020 8558 9317

email: archrights@aol.com

An internet-based children's rights organisation with a particular focus on civil rights. They support equality, choice, respect and privacy for all children and young people. Work for advancement of children's human rights, conduct research and publish information.

Freedom in Education

www.freedom-in-education.co.uk

email: wendy@freedom-in-education.co.uk

Privately run independent website which promotes alternatives to school-based education. Articles on alternatives to school-based education, and back issues of newsletter available.

Human Scale Education

www.hse.org.uk

Unit 8, Fairseat Farm, Chew Stoke, Bristol BS40 8XF

email: info@hse.org.uk

Educational charity promoting small schools and small classes.

Autism

www.autisim.org.uk

tel: 0845 070 4004

email: nas@nas.org.uk

Information on the NAS and the autistic spectrum disorders.

The Hyperactive Children's Support Group

www.hacs@hacsq.org.uk

A registered charity which has been successfully helping ADHD/Hyperactive children and their families for over 25 years. The HACSG is Britain's leading proponent of a dietary approach to the problem of hyperactivity.

Dyspraxia

Dyspraxia Foundation

<http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/>

Dyscovery Centre

<http://www.dyscovery.co.uk/index.pl>

Yahoo group specifically for dyspraxia

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/Dyspraxia-in-the-UK/>

Bully OnLine

www.bullyonline.org

The UK National Workplace bullying advice line. Bully OnLine also contains pages on workplace violence, domestic abuse, PTSD, suicide, child bullying, bullying in schools, stalking, and more.

The Travellers School Charity

www.travellersschool.plus.com

PO Box 2, Goodwick, Pembrokeshire SA64 0ZQ

tel: 01239 810 759

email: stigstrunk@aol.com

The TSC aim is that travellers access opportunities, freedom and choice, through education. To help travellers with the successful education of children. This may be through the provision of advice and materials for home education, or through back-up work for children whose education has suffered through constant changes in school. There is also a commitment to advise parents about pre-school teaching.

GOVERNMENT

DCSF

WWW.DIRECT.GOVE.UK/EN/EDUCATIONANDLEARNING/SCHOOLS/CHOOSINGASCHOOL/DG_4016124

Elective Home Education Guidelines with respect to home education in England and Wales.

PUBLICATIONS

INFED -- Informal Learning at Home

www.infed.org/biblio/home-education.htm

An article by Alan Thomas -- a study of informal learning in home education and its potential to generate positive attitudes to education, especially for people who have had bad experiences at school.

Home Educating our Autistic Spectrum Children

Paths are Made by Walking -- book

www.cary.demon.co.uk/paths

Edited by Terri Dowty and Kit Cowlshaw

JKP paperback 300 pages (December 2001)

ISBN 1843100371

Home Education: The journal of Home Education in the UK and beyond
newsletter/journal

by Mike Fortune-Wood, Home Education UK

Free Range Education: How Home Education Works

by Terri Dowty (ed)

Bound to be Free: Home education as a positive alternative to paying the hidden costs of 'free' education

Doing it Their Way: Home-based Education and Autonomous Learning

by Jan Fortune-Wood

The Face of Home-based Education

1. Who, Why and How

2. Numbers, support, special needs

by Mike Fortune-Wood

Dumbing Us Down

by John Taylor Gatto

How Children Learn

How Children Fail

Learning All The Time

Teach Your Own

by John Holt

Flexi-Schooling: Education for Tomorrow, Starting Yesterday

Learning from Home-based Education

Learning Unlimited: the home based education case-files

Natural Learning and the Natural Curriculum

The Next Learning System: and why home schoolers are trail blazers

by Roland Meighan (ed)

Learning Without School: Home Education

by Ross Mountney

Educating Children at Home

by Alan Thomas

How Children Learn at Home

by Alan Thomas and Harriet Pattison

Those Unschooled Minds

by Julie Webb