

Information for parents

Elective Home Education

Education is compulsory, schooling is not. Although the majority of parents choose to send their children to school, a number of parents choose to educate their children at home. This is called elective home education. Sometimes home educating families may get together to arrange group activities.

In Kingston and Richmond the Education Welfare Service provides support and guidance to schools, families and all relevant agencies on issues relating to elective home education.

Achieving for Children is a community interest company that delivers education and children's services across Kingston and Richmond boroughs, including education welfare.

Information and guidance on electively home educating your child

Deciding to home educate is a big responsibility. When a child is electively home educated, the local authority does not provide tutors or tell you what to teach your children. Parents are also responsible for arranging and paying for all examinations.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 says: "The parent of every child of compulsory school age will make them receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special education needs, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."

The Government has published guidelines on elective home education that can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/elective-home-education. The guidelines say that home education can be varied and flexible and that there are many, equally valid, approaches to educational provision.

Parents must make arrangements to secure education for their children from the beginning of the term following the child's fifth birthday until the end of June in the school year in which their child turns 16. Additionally, a young person must participate in education or training until the age of 18. This includes home education.

Local authorities have a duty to identify children who are missing education (CME) and to get them back into education.

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/395138/Children_missing_education_Statutory_guidance_for_local_authorities.pdf

The local authority

It is therefore very helpful if you notify the local authority when you do not need a school place and also if you move house. If we have not been notified, your child could be classed as missing education and the authority will have a duty to investigate further.

When your child is out of school because you are waiting for a place at a preferred school, we will ask you about the interim arrangements you are putting in place for your child's education.

If your child is registered at a school, and you make the decision to home educate you must put this in writing to the school.

If you don't send a formal letter to the school and instead just stop sending your child, this will be classed as unauthorised absence and someone from the school attendance team at education welfare will need to investigate why your child has stopped attending.

Schools must not put pressure on families to home educate. If you are considering home education because of problems at school but you haven't yet sent in the formal letter, we would encourage you to discuss this with your school and with the Education Welfare Service. They will be able to advise appropriately and consider options of support and more importantly confirm that you feel this is the right decision for your child.

Where parents want to home educate a child with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or an education health and care plan (EHCP), the process is the same as outlined above, except where a child is registered at a special school when consent is required from the local authority before the child's name can be taken off roll.

In cases where there is a shortfall in SEN support within the school or where the parent believes that school is not making sufficient adjustment for SEN, parents are encouraged to raise their concerns directly with the school special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) or alternatively make an appointment with the school. Parents can also contact the Parent Partnership Officer on 020 8547 6203.

Once you have sent in the formal de-registration letter, the school will notify the authority and your child's name will be removed from the school roll. Your child's school place will now no longer be available. The school will notify the local authority within 48 hours. If you later decide you do want a school place, schools do not accept direct applications outside the normal admissions round. You will have to go through the authority's in-year admissions process which could involve a delay before your application is considered by a panel.

When the authority receives notification from the school of your decision to home educate, the Education Welfare Service will contact you. We will send you out a request for information form, which, when you have completed and returned it, provides us with general background information. An education welfare officer (EWO) will contact you to ask you if you would like a home visit.

We will then look to arrange for a visit to take place within 10 days to offer guidance and support.

Following the initial EWO contact, we will then discuss with you the education advisor's role which is to introduce themselves and offer a meeting to discuss the provision. The education advisor will aim to visit you at home within 28 days. If you not wish to take up the offer of a visit, you can request a telephone consultation which we will be willing to organise.

For those parents new to elective home education who would like an additional visit, this can be offered for in the first year. Subsequently, the education advisor visit will be offered on an annual basis. Parents are also welcome to contact the education advisor outside these times for any additional support and guidance that can assist the provision they provide.

If your child has special educational needs you can discuss any concerns with the advisor who will be able to signpost you to additional support services. You may also contact the parent partnership officer, whose details you can find above.

In addition, where a home educated child has a statement or education health and care plan, the local authority has a duty to review the plan annually to see if it remains appropriate. The SEN Service will take the lead on this and will write to you about this in due course

It is important to note that the authority has a duty to take steps where it appears that a child is not being educated.

Information for parents where it appears that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving education

If it appears to a local authority that a child of compulsory school age in its area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, it will serve a notice in writing to the parent requiring them to satisfy the local authority, within the period specified in the notice, that the child is actually receiving an education.

Suitable education is defined in law as suitable to age ability aptitude and any special educational needs the child may have.

In rare cases, it is possible that the local authority will direct a parent to enrol their child at a school by means of a School Attendance Order. The authority will begin by dealing with this situation informally. The education advisor will set out any concerns and ask parents for a response. This process will also apply where the authority has received a referral from another agency about the child's education. The timescale will be decided on a case by case basis.

We would hope that the parents' response is sufficient for the matter not to be taken further, but where it still appears to the authority that the child is not receiving efficient full-time education suitable to age ability aptitude and special needs, a formal notice will be sent to the parents, requiring them to provide evidence of suitable education. The manager of the Education Welfare Service will now be involved.

If suitable evidence is not forthcoming and the authority believes it would be appropriate for the child to attend school, a School Attendance Order will be served and parents will either have to register their child at a named school or provide sufficient additional evidence to cause the authority to revoke the order. Parents can also be prosecuted for failing to comply with a School Attendance Order.

14-19 elective home educated pupils' information

Home educated children can now attend college at 14 with course fees being paid by the Education Funding Agency. It is up to each individual college to decide what they can offer to this age group. Please be aware that the local authority is not in a position to support the funding of any such courses.

Examinations

Home educated young people take examinations as external candidates which is an issue in GCSEs that have coursework or controlled assessment. It is up to families to identify suitable qualifications and find an appropriate exam centre for the young person to sit the exams. you can ask the advisory teacher for more information or look at the information provided at www.home-educationexams.org.uk

Orleans House Gallery in Twickenham is a registered exam centre and can be contacted on: 020 8831 6462 or 020 8831 6493.

Accessing college or sixth form

Home educated young people can go on to college or sixth form if they choose. GCSEs or equivalent are normally required before a student can begin an A Level course. The normal application process begins up to nine months before the course starts and while it is possible to apply much later, yourthe chosen course might be full.

Local further education colleges

NESCOT: 020 8394 1713

Kingston College: 020 8546 2151

Richmond College: 020 8607 8000

Esher College: 020 8398 0291

Health and wellbeing

The Education Welfare Service provides advice and support regarding the welfare and wellbeing of children. The education welfare officer will help you consider your child's wellbeing and access services to support you and your child.

A school nurse is available for all school age children including those who are electively home educated. Please contact for Royal Borough of Kingston School Nursing team on 020 8549 6323 and for London Borough of Richmond School Nursing team on 020 7980 8050. Education Welfare Service does not routinely share information with other agencies.

Child protection and safeguarding

Any concerns about the safety, wellbeing or welfare of a child will be referred to the appropriate statutory agency. You will be informed unless there is a risk to your child.

Further information

If you have any questions or would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Education Welfare Service on: ews@achievingforchildren.org.uk



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