



Information and guidance on elective home education for parents

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Context

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 (EHE).

Our procedures are based on the legislative framework established by the Education Act 1996 (Elective Home Education guidelines) and have been developed in the context of the duty placed on local authorities to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (Section 175 of the Education Act 2002). More information can be found on the [Department for Education Elective Home Education: Guidance for parents](#).

If the local authority considers that any safeguarding concerns exist in relation to a home educated child, we will act accordingly.

The procedures aim to achieve an appropriate balance between the rights of home educating parents and the responsibilities of the local authority.

Approach to elective home education

On behalf of Kingston and Richmond local authorities, Achieving for Children's (AfC's) Education Welfare Service will offer advice and guidance to parents to support their decision to home educate their child. Achieving for Children recognises that parents and carers have a right to educate their children at home. Achieving for children is committed to working in partnership and building positive relationships with home educating parents to help ensure that their children are provided with efficient, full-time education suitable for their age, ability, and aptitude and to any special educational needs (SEN) they might have.

The aim of this document is to:

- clarify the legal position regarding elective home education
- identify the respective roles and responsibilities of home educating parents and the local authority
- establish clear, transparent and fair processes and systems

What is a parent's duty?

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." Additionally, a young person must participate in education or training until the age of 18. This includes home education. Please note, the term 'parent' is used throughout this guidance to include all those with parental responsibility.

Deciding to home educate your child is a big responsibility. When a parent makes this decision, the local authority does not provide tutors or tell you what to teach your child. As a parent you will be responsible for all aspects of your child's education, including their social and emotional development, as well as taking on full financial responsibility for their learning, for example, paying for any books, equipment, stationery, trips or tutors you choose to use. If you want your child to sit public examinations, such as GCSEs, you will be responsible for arranging all examinations and will bear the cost of these.

What is efficient education?

This is not defined in the act. Each case has to be judged according to the child's needs and the educational provision made. However, this phrase does not mean that school subjects have to be provided. Parents will need to show that the opportunities being provided are helping the child to learn, and that development is taking place appropriate to 'age, ability and aptitude'. An education should equip a child for life in the 21st century and not limit future life choices.

What is full time?

The length of time is not specified. To help you decide, children in school spend approximately 25 hours on work each week, plus homework, according to age. Children at state schools attend for 39 weeks a year.

What does 'or otherwise' mean?

This phrase is not defined in law, but would include children being taught at home by parents, including the use of online or distance courses, or by private tutors.

What if my child has an education, health and care plan (EHCP)?

Please see the section on EHCP on page 5.

Making the decision to electively home educate

Parents make the decision to EHE for many reasons

If your child is registered at a school and you make the decision to home educate, you must put this in writing to the headteacher. We will request a copy of this notification. Once the formal de-registration letter (or email) to your child's school has been received, they will notify Achieving for Children within 48 hours and your child's name will be removed from the school roll. Your child's school place will now no longer be available.

If your child has never been registered in a school, or you have recently moved into one of our boroughs, you should notify Achieving for Children that you are choosing to home educate. We also ask you to tell us if you are home educating and you move house.

If at any time you decide you want your child to return to school, you will have to go through the authority's in-year admissions process. Schools do not accept direct applications outside the normal admissions round.

If you do not notify the school and just stop sending your child, this will be classed as 'unauthorised' absence. Someone from the Education Welfare Service will need to make checks to find out why your child has stopped attending.

Schools must not put pressure on families to home educate, the decision rests with the parents. If you are considering home education because you have concerns about an aspect of your child's current school provision, it is really important to discuss this with your school and with the Education Welfare Service. They will be able to advise appropriately, help to resolve your concerns, consider options of support and, more importantly, help you to confirm that home education is definitely the right decision for your child.

In cases where your concerns relate to the additional support for your child's special educational needs, parents are encouraged to raise their concerns directly with the school special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) or, alternatively, make an appointment with the school. Advice and information about support for children with additional needs can be found on the [Local Offer](#) website. Parents can also contact the parent partnership service for advice RichmondKingston@kids.org.uk

Position of the local authority

A local authority has a duty to ensure that all children receive an education. To fulfill this requirement, we will need to establish the educational provision you are providing. Once we have received confirmation that you intend to electively home educate, you will be asked to complete and return a request for information (RIF) form providing details of your educational arrangements for your child.

We are also happy for you to attach an education plan which includes a sample of the work being undertaken and outlines the education provision.

As part of our processes, following confirmation of your intention to electively home educate, an education welfare officer (EWO) will make contact with you. We aim to do this within 15 working days. The EWO will initially discuss your arrangements and may offer a home visit.

In addition, all those who are new to home education may receive an offer of support from our education adviser, who is a qualified teacher.

If your child has additional needs and has an education, health care plan (EHCP) our education adviser will contact you and may offer to visit you at home. This will allow the education adviser to discuss the education arrangements for your child with you as well as explain to you that the local authority has a duty to review the plan annually to see if it remains appropriate to meet your child's needs. Please see the next section for more information.

Education adviser

In some circumstances, we may offer a visit from the education welfare officer and the education adviser, we do encourage parents to consider these. The visit offered by the education welfare officer is to provide you with an opportunity to discuss any questions you may have regarding elective home education so you are satisfied that it is the right decision for you as parents and your child.

Once you have spoken with the education welfare, our education adviser will contact you in approximately 12 weeks to talk to you and will ask to see any samples of the education you are providing. The education adviser has a good knowledge of the varied range and philosophies of home education. They will also consider whether the education provided is satisfactory.

- It must be sufficient enough to convince a reasonable person of its appropriateness for your child's age, aptitude and ability.
- Evidence of work provided must demonstrate your child's learning ability and any special educational needs they may have in a variety of ways. For example, pictures, paintings, models, diaries of work, projects, and assessments, samples of work, books, and educational visits.

Where education is considered to be efficient, full time and suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of our child, the education adviser will send you a report and then contact you on an annual basis to review the situation.

Parents have reported that they find the visits helpful and reassuring, despite any initial worries that some new home educators may have about it.

If, however, you choose to decline the education adviser's visit, we will ask you to provide evidence of your child's work, either electronically or by post.

The types of evidence that would be satisfactory:

- a detailed description of the provision, including yours (or other significant carers) involvement
- samples of your child's work and how you monitor their progress
- a recognition of your child's needs, attitudes and aspirations
- opportunities you are providing for your child to be stimulated by their learning experiences
- resources you provide for their education that will demonstrate their learning

A report will then be sent to you from our education adviser confirming that the work sent is satisfactory or not according to the DfE guidelines.

Where education is considered not to be suitable, the education adviser will contact you to discuss this and offer an additional visit or other guidance. The nature of any concerns will be clearly explained to you and advice and support offered. If you have any concerns about meeting with the adviser and would like to discuss this further, please contact the Education Welfare Service by email: ews@achievingforchildren.org.uk

In some cases, if sufficient progress has not been made, it is possible that the local authority will seek to apply for a school attendance order (SAO) requiring your child to attend the school named in the order. Failing to comply with an SAO would then become an offence under the Education Act 1996.

At any stage following the application of the order, you may present further evidence to the local authority that you are now providing an appropriate education and apply to have the order revoked. Achieving for Children will only apply for an SAO as a last resort following all reasonable steps to resolve the situation.

Annual consultation

We will contact you annually to review the education your child is receiving so that we can make sure it remains satisfactory and to offer you further guidance if needed. We will ask you to provide samples of your child's work and any updates about the provision. The information can be sent by email or post.

Children with special educational needs (SEN)

The DfE elective home education guidance for parents says: 'Your right to educate your child at home applies equally where your child has SEN. This right is irrespective of whether your child has an education, health and care plan or not.'

Education, health and care plan (EHCP)

There is a legal requirement to make particular arrangements where a child has an education, health and care plan. This does not change when a parent begins home education. A local authority's statutory duty to undertake an annual review continues. The review will consider whether the EHCP is still appropriate and it may be possible to alter or even stop maintaining the EHCP. If it is necessary for the EHCP to remain in place, parents continue to have responsibility for the education provided. However, we have a legal duty to ensure that the child's needs are met. Guidance will be given in your child's education and health care plan. We must be satisfied that the parent is making provision for the child, as set out in Part 3 of the plan.

What if my child is registered as a pupil at a special school?

This should not usually prevent you from electing to home educate your child, but the process is slightly different.

The special needs (education) regulations say, 'The parents of a child who is of compulsory school age and is registered as a pupil at a special school in accordance with arrangements made by the local authority, shall not withdraw the child from the school without the consent of the local authority, but any parents aggrieved by refusal of the authority to give their consent may refer the question to the Secretary of State, who will give direction as they think fit.'

We will clearly need to examine each request in detail but, until the process is complete, the child should remain on the roll of the special school named in the education, health and care plan.

Once satisfied, a local authority is under no obligation to meet the costs of the home provision. It is, however, still under a duty to maintain the child's EHCP and review it annually to see if it remains appropriate in accordance with the Education Act 1996, Children and Families Act 2014, Special Educational Needs Regulations and the relevant SEN Code of Practice.

We would advise you to speak to the SEN caseworker for your child before making the decision to electively home educate or email senteam@achievingforchildren.org.uk.

For more information on local services and support available for families including children and young people aged 0 to 25 years with special educational needs or disabilities visit the [AfCInfo](#) website.

Examinations

Home educated young people can take examinations as external candidates. It is up to families to identify suitable qualifications and find an appropriate exam centre for the young person to sit the exams. The exam has to be taken at an approved exam centre which may be a secondary school or post-16 provider. As a home educator you will have to contact the provider directly. You should contact individual examination boards directly for lists of approved examination centres and costs.

- You will have to pay for any exam registration fee and assessment of coursework by an accredited person. The registration fee for each GCSE exam is approximately £100.
- Some GCSE courses may be offered by adult education centres.
- Online correspondence courses are also available, although they can be expensive (from over £350 per subject).
- If you would like your child to take GCSEs at no cost, they will need to be on a school roll. To enable them to be on a school roll for Year 10, you should start the process before the preceding autumn term by emailing the Schools Admission Team of the borough you live in for advice: richmond.admissions@achievingforchildren.org.uk or kingston.admissions@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Information on post-16 opportunities

Parents and young people can obtain support and information from the 14-25 Partnership regarding future pathways and post-16 opportunities so that home educated young people have the same opportunities as those who are registered at school.

The Opportunities Pack provides a summary of post-16 learning options and further help for young people aged 16 to 19 in Kingston and Richmond. For more information, please contact the 14-25 team by email: 14-25@achievingforchildren.org.uk or look on the AfCInfo website: [Information for young people](#).

Accessing college or sixth form

A placement at a college of further education is a possibility depending on the current national and local funding. The normal application process begins up to nine months before the course starts. Achieving for Children has no funding available for this.

It is worth noting that once a pupil is 16 years of age, they may be able to enroll on a wide range of courses, including GCSEs and A/AS level exams. You and your child will need to consider long term job or career aspirations, before deciding whether they actually need to study GCSEs. GCSE exams are not necessarily a prerequisite to higher levels of formal education, but may be a requirement for some post-16 college courses and types of employment.

Local further education colleges

Please find details of our nearest local colleges. This list is by no means exhaustive.

Nescot College	020 8394 1713
Kingston College	020 8546 2151
Richmond upon Thames College	020 8607 8000
Esher College	020 8398 0291
West Thames College	020 8326 2020
South Thames College	020 8918 7777

Health and wellbeing

The Education Welfare Service provides advice and guidance regarding the welfare and wellbeing of children. The education welfare officer can signpost you to services that are available to support you and your child. More information about services and opportunities for young people can be found on the [AfCInfo](#) website.

The school nursing team is available to all school age children. School health teams can offer health reviews, support, education, advice and guidance to children and young people who are home educated.

For primary school aged children, this may include a height, weight and hearing check, and an immunisation review. You can discuss any health concerns over the telephone, and advice and support will be offered regarding any concerns identified. Advice will be given about access to primary care and dental services as well as local services providing health promotion.

For secondary school aged children and young people, the school nursing team can offer a health assessment if you have concerns about the health of your child, an immunisation review and support regarding physical and emotional health and wellbeing. If you would like more information please contact them directly. Kingston School Health team can be contacted on 020 8549 6323. Richmond School Health Service can be contacted on 020 7798 0850.

A local authority has a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children as a requirement of the Children's Act 2004.

The local authority will aim to meet its safeguarding responsibilities and functions in relation to home educated children by attempting to engage proactively with all home educating parents and will seek to see, speak with and ascertain the views of children who are home educated.

Sections 17 and 47 of the Children's Act, allows local authorities to see children to enquire about their welfare. Should either the education welfare officer or the education adviser have concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child, they will tell the parents verbally and record the concerns in the record of their visit. The parent will be informed that our concerns will be shared with the appropriate statutory children's services.

Whilst a failure to respond to Achieving for Children's informal enquiries will not in itself be evidence of safeguarding concerns, a repeated and persistent failure to respond, together with other contextual information, may in certain circumstances cause Achieving for Children to consider the need for further action.

If the parents of a child who is subject to a child protection plan declare an intention to home educate, Achieving for Children may oppose this, unless it can be demonstrated that home education will be in the child's best interests and will not prejudice the effective implementation of the child's child protection plan.

Sources of information and support

If you would like to talk to someone about elective home education, or would like further information, please contact the Education Welfare Service:

ews@achievingforchildren.org.uk

The government has published guidelines on elective home education that can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/elective-home-education

Further information can be found on the AfCInfo website at: <https://kr.afcinfo.org.uk>

EHE support groups can be found on Facebook and other forms of social media.