

Elective Home Education Guide for Parents

Elective Home Education- Guide for Parents

Introduction

Some parents believe that children can receive the best and broadest education by attending school, they believe that teachers have the skills to help children make the most of their abilities and interests, providing the opportunity for children to mix with others and develop their ability to build relationships and interact socially, allowing their children to achieve their potential. Other parents may feel that they are able to provide a similar or better education by educating their child at home.

In this country, parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that their children receive a suitable education. Most parents choose to use schools but some prefer home education. It is the legal right of parents to educate their children at home if they so wish and Middlesbrough Council wishes to work cooperatively in close partnership with those parents who make this choice. The following guidance is intended to help parents who are considering home education, or have decided to home educate their child. We hope it will ensure that parents/carers who decide on education at home have considered and understand their rights and responsibilities and the duties of Middlesbrough Local Authority (LA).

Guidance on the Law

Parents/carers must ensure that a child receives a full-time education from the beginning of the school term after their 5th birthday. Most parents choose to send their child to school, but they do have the legal right to educate their child at home if they wish to do so.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him 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.”

The word otherwise confirms a parents right to educate their child at home, this is known as Elective Home Education.

Whichever education path a parent/carer decides to take it is a good idea for them to talk to the child and take their wishes and feelings into consideration when reaching any decision.

An “efficient” or “suitable” education is not defined in any act however an efficient education has been broadly described as an education that achieves what it sets out to achieve and a suitable education is one that prepares a child for life within the community of which they are 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 they wish to do so.

The law does not define the term “full-time education”, children in school usually receive 21-25 hours of teaching and learning each week for 38 weeks of the year but children who are educated at home are often taught in very different conditions and there is no direct comparison with school based timetables or educational arrangements. It is a parent’s responsibility to ensure that their children are given appropriate learning opportunities so that they may develop according to their age, ability and aptitude.

Do parents need permission to educate a child at home?

If a child already attends school parents/carers must notify the Head Teacher of the school in writing of their decision to educate their child at home. Although parents are not legally required to inform the LA, we suggest that they do so to ensure that the LA is aware of the change, you can do this using the contact details at the back of this guide or by completing and returning the attached form. It is also recommended that parents also inform the LA of any significant changes to their circumstances e.g. a change of address. Upon receipt of written notification from parents/carers of their decision to home educate the child's name will be removed from the school roll and the school will have no further responsibility for the child's education.

If a child has never attended a school there is no action for a parent/carer to take prior to educating their child at home. However we would ask that you notify Middlesbrough LA so initial advice and support can be offered and this will enable the LA to carry out their duties and responsibilities in a helpful way.

If a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan and attends a special school the child's name may not be removed from the school's register without the consent of the LA. Parents/carers must demonstrate to the LA that they are making provision to meet the special educational needs of their child but this does not need to be offered in the same way as specified in any current Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) which is likely to be written on the basis of current provision being offered within an educational setting. Many children and young people with EHCPs have their needs met in mainstream settings. Any parents of children and young people with an EHCP who are considering elective home education are advised to speak to the SEN Team to discuss this matter before making a decision. The SEN Team can be contacted on Tel: 01642 201830 (children/young people aged 14-25) or Tel: 01642 729228 (children/young people aged 0-13) or email: sen@middlesbrough.gov.uk.

It is likely that a member of the SEN team would offer to accompany an officer from Access to Education team as part of the home visit to discuss various issues relating to EHE and SEN with a parent as part of the process towards moving to elective home education. If during discussion, a parent confirms a wish to pursue elective home education for a child/young person who has an EHCP, the LA SEN team will review whether it is necessary to retain the EHCP and may issue an amended EHCP in draft to indicate the LA view as to the needs of the child/young person and the type of provision felt appropriate to meet those needs but also to acknowledge and confirm the parental right to electively home educate their child. Parents' existing rights in respect of EHCPs and decisions of the LA remain in place whether or not a parent pursues elective home education and more information can be provided upon request to the SEN team.

In addition, if the EHCP is to remain in place, the LA SEN team will make arrangements with Access to Education colleagues and parents to review the EHCP each year as usual perhaps during a joint home visit to make this more convenient for parents.

Things to consider before withdrawing your child from school

The decision to educate a child at home should not be taken lightly, nor should it be taken in haste. Before making the commitment to educate a child at home parents/carers should give consideration to the following:

- The reasons why they are considering education at home

- Any potential costs involved in providing education at home, consider things like the costs of books and resources, visits, equipment, internet access, social opportunities, tutors etc
- The benefits to a child of participating in social aspects of school life such as contact with other children, group activities and motivation for learning and interacting with other children of similar ages. Parents/carers will need to give consideration as to how their child's social development can be maintained and extended if being educated at home
- The impact on family life
- If parents/carers circumstances, i.e. work commitments, were to change how this could impact on the education at home arrangements of the child
- Whether any alternative options to education at home are available- the Choice Advice Service can assist with this- Tel: 01642 201872 or 07976553390
Email: choiceadvice@middlesbrough.gov.uk

What happens when a parent/carer withdraws their child from school?

The school upon receipt of written notification from the parent/carer of their decision to educate at home must notify the LA. An Elective Home Education Officer will then contact the family to arrange a visit in order to:

- Offer advice on the rights and responsibilities of the parents/carers and the LA
- Clarify whether there is any information that the parents/carers need
- Respond to any queries the family may have
- Discuss any issues or problems
- Discuss proposals to ensure the child is receiving an efficient, full time education suitable to their needs, age ability and aptitude.

An Elective Home Education Officer will then contact the family on an occasional basis, giving written notice in advance, to update our records and discuss any aspects the young person, parents/carers or the Elective Home Education Officer wish to raise. These visits can take place at family's home address or at an alternative venue if you would prefer this. LAs have no automatic right to access a parent's home, however a parent/carers may wish to permit access to their home or offer an alternative venue for a meeting. At the initial meeting, the nature and frequency of future contact will be agreed.

Local authorities have general duties to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. These duties allow local authorities to insist on seeing children in order to enquire about their welfare where there are grounds for concern. The welfare and protection of all children, both those who attend school and those who are educated at home are of paramount concern. If any child protection or safeguarding concerns come to light in the course of engagement with children and families, or otherwise, these concerns will be immediately referred to the appropriate authorities using established protocols.

Do parents/carers need any formal qualifications to educate their child at home?

No, parents/carers do not have to be a qualified teacher or have set formal qualifications to educate their child at home. They will however need to have the necessary skills to be able to plan their child's education and to support their learning on an ongoing basis.

Do you have to follow the National Curriculum if you educate your child at home?

No, parents/carers do not have to follow the National Curriculum. When educating a child at home, what the child is taught and how this is taught is at the discretion of the parents/carers. The hours that are covered and how the day is organised are also a matter for the individual parents/carers. Home education does not have to follow a set plan of lessons or a timetable or follow school term dates. Not all home educators follow a timetable or lesson plans however some parents/carers find this beneficial in assisting them with their education provision.

What could happen if home education is not meeting my child's needs?

If there are concerns about the education provision for a child this will be explained to the parent/carer and the LA will work with the family to find a way forward. Parents are under no obligation to cooperate with requests for home visits and can instead share information about their child's education at home arrangements in writing. If following receipt of this information or if information is not provided an Elective Home Education Officer will attempt to make contact with the family. If it appears that a child is not receiving a suitable or efficient education then the School Attendance Order process will be commenced. This process can result in legal action which will enforce a parent to provide an efficient and suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Issuing a School Attendance Order however is always a last resort for the LA.

Is there any financial assistance available for parents/carers who decide to educate their child at home?

Parents/carers who elect to educate their child at home take on full financial responsibility for their child's education. Parents/carers are strongly encouraged to plan ahead and think carefully about the costs associated with educating children at home, especially if children may wish to take exams in the future. Parents/carers should consider how a change in their circumstances i.e. changing work commitments, could affect the education provision for their child.

Parents/carers may choose to employ other people to educate their child however the parents/carers themselves will continue to be responsible for the education provided. The parents/carers will also be responsible for ensuring that those who they engage to provide their child's education are suitable to have access to children. The LA do not hold a list of recommended or DBS checked tutors and do not provide any financial assistance towards the cost of home education or home tutors.

What if I change my mind about education at home?

The child's name is removed from the school register when the school receives written notification from a parent/carer of their decision to home educate. At this point the school place can be given to another child, a school cannot keep a place open for your child to return to if you change your mind however you can apply for a school place at any time and places will be allocated if the chosen school has a place available in the relevant year group. Contact the Choice Adviser, for information about applying for a school place and assistance with completing the necessary application forms.

Choice Advice Service- Tel: 01642 201872 or 07976553390, Email:
choiceadvice@middlesbrough.gov.uk

My child is unable to attend school due to a medical condition

If a child is unable to attend school due to a medical condition or due to anxieties relating to school attendance, please speak to the Choice Advice Service for advice and guidance on the available options.

Choice Advice Service- Tel: 01642 201872 or 07976553390, Email:
choiceadvice@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Can my child take exams whilst being educated at home?

Children who are home educated do not have to undertake any public examinations. It is important for parents/carers to ensure that children are making progress whilst being educated at home, it is advisable that parents/carers have a systematic approach to monitoring this progress whether this be through tests or other means, this can help parents/carers to identify whether a child is making progress at a pace appropriate to their ability and can help to identify gaps in their knowledge and understanding.

Key Stage 1 and 2 National assessments and mark schemes can be downloaded from
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/key-stage-2-tests-past-papers>

Information about Key Stage 3 and 4 assessments can be found online
<https://www.gov.uk/education/secondary-curriculum-key-stage-3-and-key-stage-4-gcses>

It is possible for children who are educated at home to take exams as private (external) candidates. If your child wishes to do this you will need to find a registered centre for the exams; these include local schools and colleges. You will need to factor in the cost of the awarding body (examination boards) fees and the cost of the examination centre invigilation of the exams chosen. Unfortunately there is no funding available from the LA towards the costs of sitting exams for children who are educated at home.

Parents/carers should be aware that not all awarding bodies offer qualifications that are suitable for private candidates due to the supervised coursework and controlled assessment elements of some examinations, this can be a potential barrier to sitting exams particularly for those who decide to home educate late in the academic year when examinations are due to be taken or mid-way through a course of study. It is therefore advisable for parents/carers to contact the individual awarding bodies to discuss the arrangements at the earliest opportunity. Contact details for the relevant awarding bodies can be found below:

AQA

Telephone: 0800 197 7162

Email: eos@aqa.org.uk

OCR

General qualifications, including GCSE and GCE:

Telephone: 01223 553998

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

Vocational qualifications

Including Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals and NVQs:

Telephone: 02476 851509

Email: vocational.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

Edexcel

Use the online form to find the answers to your questions, or information on how to get in touch with the learner support team. This can be accessed from:

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-for-you/students/contact-us.html>

WJEC

Telephone: 029 2026 5000

Email: info@wjec.co.uk

Cambridge

Telephone: 01223 553554

Email: Submit an online enquiry form at https://ask.cie.org.uk/hc/en-gb/requests/new?ticket_form_id=53542&adt=0

On the awarding body websites you will find not only the syllabus and a wide range of supporting materials for your chosen qualifications, but also examples of the forms you will need to fill in to register for these. It is important to note that you have to fill in these forms yourself as your chosen examination centre does not do this for you.

An alternative approach is to investigate the support available from distance learning providers such as:

The National Extension College: <https://www.nec.ac.uk/content/home-educators> or

Oxford Home Schooling: <http://www.oxfordhomeschooling.co.uk/>.

These organisations offer private tuition alongside a suite of courses such as IGCSE which provide preparation for the next stage in education without the controlled assessments. Parents may find that this type of qualification better serves the needs of home schooling students than traditional GCSE examinations, whilst still allowing students to progress to A Level, apply for vocational courses, or enter the wider world of work. Although such agencies also provide support to find an examination centre and they facilitate the booking procedure, parents/carers are still responsible for facilitating the final examination at their chosen centre. Parents/carers should be aware that these fees can add up to several hundred pounds per examination, particularly if you do not submit a registration form for your chosen qualification in good time and late fees are applied.

Parents/carers may also wish to contact local colleges to enquire as to whether they are willing to allow home educated children to take exams as private candidates and whether there is any funding available for particular courses of study.

How does compulsory school age affect children who are educated at home?

The compulsory age for a child to start full time education in the UK is at the beginning of the school term after the child's fifth birthday. All children are required to stay in learning or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 18 years old.

The school leaving date for any young person whether attending school or being educated at home is the last Friday in June if they will be 16 before the end of the summer holidays.

The young person then must do one of the following until they are 18:

- Stay in full time education i.e. school, college or home education
- Work based learning such as an apprenticeship or traineeship
- Part-time education or training if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering for more than 20 hours a week.

Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/know-when-you-can-leave-school/>

All local authorities have a statutory duty to secure suitable education and training places for 16 and 17 year olds to support them to participate in training or learning. If you require any advice or guidance on the next steps for your child please contact Middlesbrough Council's Work Readiness Team on Tel: 01642 513162. Email: workreadinessteam@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Where can parents/carers obtain further information about education at home or alternative options?

Parents/carers can consider home education for many different reasons, to obtain further information parents/carers can speak to an Elective Home Education Officer. An officer will happily discuss any queries or concerns a parent/carer may have either by telephone or email or they can arrange to visit the family to discuss their situation either in the family home or at an alternative location. Tel: 01642 201846

Email: electivehomeeducation@middlesbrough.gov.uk

If parents/carers are considering educating their child at home as a result of a disagreement with a school we recommend that parents/carers speak to the Choice Advice Service before making the decision to withdraw their child from school and educate their child at home as the Choice Adviser can provide an independent and impartial advocacy service to parents and carers to address any concerns that they may have. Choice Advice Service- Tel: 01642 201872 or 07976553390

Email: choiceadvice@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Listed below are some further organisations which provide advice for parents/carers.

Education Otherwise

A UK-based membership organisation that provides support and information for families whose children are being educated outside of school.

Education Otherwise

PO Box 3761

Swindon

SN2 9GT

Telephone 0845 478 6345

www.education-otherwise.net/

Home Education Advisory Service (HEAS)

A national home education charity based in the United Kingdom, 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.

Home Education Advisory Service

PO Box 98

Welwyn Garden City

Hertfordshire

AL8 6AN

Telephone 01707 371854

www.heas.org.uk

Home Education in the UK

This website offers information and website links for home educators.

www.home-education.org.uk

Educational Freedom

This website provides information and links for home educators in the UK.

www.EducationalFreedom.org.uk

Tees Valley Home Education Group

<https://uk.groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/tvhe/info>

Educational Websites

The Local Authority is not responsible for the content of the websites listed in this guide and does not endorse third party websites. The websites listed below have been recommended by parents/carers who home educate, some websites may incur a cost.

BBC Education provides a wide range of useful information: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education>

Information on the countries of the world, with historical, geographical and political information, maps, opportunities to join online discussions: www.countryreports.org

A subscription site providing a range of literacy and numeracy worksheets based on themes:

www.edhelper.com

A range of fun and practical project-based activities:

www.educationguardian.co.uk/primaryresources

GCSE revision guides: www.gcse.com

Online correspondence courses with advice: www.learndirect.co.uk

A science website: www.planet-science.com

A student Support Centre offers personalised learning programmes for pupils aged 4-17 in English and Maths www.student-support.co.uk

Primary phase activities, plus book reviews: www.teachingideas.co.uk

Online maths support and resources, including worksheets, animated and spoken guides and tests: www.10ticks.co.uk/homelearning

Twinkl- Education resource website with printable worksheets and resources www.twinkl.co.uk/

Useful Contacts

Elective Home Education Designated Officer

Tel: 01642 201846

Email: electivehomeeducation@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Choice Advice Service

Choice Advice Service- Tel: 01642 201872 or 07976553390

Email: choiceadvice@middlesbrough.gov.uk

SEN Team

Tel: 01642 201831

Email: sen@middlesbrough.gov.uk

SENDIASS Special Education Needs and Disabilities Information Advice Support Service

Tel: 01642 608012

Email: MAIN_SENDIASSMiddlesbrough@iammain.org.uk

School Admissions Team- Middlesbrough Council

Tel: 01642 201856

Email: schooladmissions@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Work Readiness Team- Middlesbrough Council

Tel: 01642 513162

Email: workreadinessteam@middlesbrough.gov.uk

If you have any comments regarding the information contained within this guide, or have any queries relating to home education in Middlesbrough, please contact an Elective Home Education Designated Officer tel: 01642 201846 or email: electivehomeeducation@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Disclaimer: Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that all the third party information contained in this guide is correct we have reproduced this in good faith and do not guarantee its accuracy. The Local Authority is not responsible for the content of the websites listed in this guide and does not endorse third party websites.

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