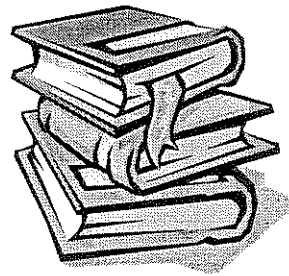




Children's Services

Elective Home Education



A Guide for Parents

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Introduction

Elective Home Education (EHE) is the term used by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to describe a parent's decision to provide education for their child at home instead of sending him or her to school.

Deciding to educate your child at home is a major step that involves commitment and a large investment of time and energy. There are a wide variety of reasons for choosing to home educate. If it is due to an unresolved dispute with a school, we would always strongly recommend that parents first discuss it with the school and attempt to work out any difficulties.

It is well worthwhile talking to someone who has experience of the highs and lows of home education before making your final decision. There are several support groups in England to help home educators — an Internet search on "home education" will list these groups, some of which have local support networks.

EHE can be a happy and constructive experience for both you and your child, and, if you are considering taking this option, we hope that this guide will help you to decide.

The guide is designed to answer the questions we are frequently asked about the legal, academic and practical implications of educating a child at home. It also outlines the way in which Darlington Borough Council (DBC) carries out its duties as the Local Authority (LA) responsible for education in the borough.

The term *parent* is used throughout to refer to anyone with parental responsibility, including guardians and carers. Duties and responsibilities referred to are those required under the 1996 Education Act. Text in quotation marks comes from the EHE guidance issued by the DCSF in 2007.

Parental Rights and Responsibilities

As a parent, must I send my child to school?

No, but you are responsible for ensuring that your child, if of compulsory school age, receives "an appropriate full-time education".

What does *compulsory school age* mean?

From the start of the school term following your child's fifth birthday until the last Friday of June in the school year in which he or she reaches the age of sixteen, your child must receive an education.

What is a parent's actual duty?

The parents of every child of compulsory school age must arrange for that child to receive "efficient full-time education suitable to his or her age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he or she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise". *Otherwise* includes your right to choose EHE.

Must I notify anyone of my decision to home educate?

If your child is registered at a school in Darlington, you should inform the headteacher, in writing, of your plan to remove your child from the school register in order to home educate. The headteacher will then inform us.

If your child has never been registered at a school (or if you have moved here from an area served by another LA), you are not obliged to tell us or seek approval, but it is a good idea to tell us so that we can work together.

What if I choose EHE and then change my mind?

If at any time you want your child to enter or return to the school system (or are unsure about how to do this), you may contact our School Admissions Team.

What if we are home educating and decide to move?

Please notify the EHE administrator — see Contacts.

The Local Authority's Responsibilities

What is the LA's duty under the 1996 Education Act?

We have a duty to intervene if it seems parents are not providing a suitable education and, to enable us to ascertain whether home education is suitable, we gather evidence.

Suitable is defined by law as equipping a child for life within the community, and at the same time allowing him or her in later life to adopt "some other form of life if he or she wishes to do so".

What evidence might the LA request?

Once a parent has advised us of the decision to home educate, we arrange a mutually convenient home visit. If the parent is unwilling to meet us in their home, we will agree on a neutral venue. We prefer to discuss the child's work with both the parent and the child, to assess whether EHE is suitable. However, the parent may choose to meet LA officers alone or not at all.

If a parent chose not to meet us, we would ask to see samples of the child's work, diaries, reports from parents or tutors, or a description of the parent's educational philosophy. Parents are under no duty to respond to such requests, but it would be sensible for them to do so.

What if our provision of home education is considered unsuitable?

After each visit, or on receipt of appropriate evidence, we will send you our report within five working days, including any recommendations we may have.

If we believe you are not providing a suitable education, we may request further visits and/or evidence, with the aim of helping you to overcome any difficulties within a mutually agreed timescale.

If, in the end, we consider that your child is still not receiving a suitable education, it is our duty to serve a notice informing you that the education is not suitable, and give you an opportunity to

remedy the situation. The LA prefers to address such situations informally in the first instance. At this stage, parents are encouraged to provide information in any of the forms mentioned above. Parents are under no duty to respond to such enquiries, but it would be sensible for them to do so.

We may decide to issue a school attendance order. This means that EHE can no longer proceed, and the child must be sent to the school named on the order. However, even if a school attendance order has been issued, a parent may provide us with evidence and apply to have the order revoked.

Prior to a school attendance order, an additional meeting will be held with representatives of those services currently involved with the child or the family, to see if we may offer any further support.

How is the LA involved in EHE?

We are always happy to help and advise but are unable to offer direct teaching or to provide teaching materials. We may suggest that parents hire a tutor but are unable to make personal recommendations.

Similarly, we are unable to arrange for work experience placements but may recommend that parents do so.

If parents are entering their child for public exams, such as GCSEs, we can help them to find the most appropriate examination centre, but payment remains the parents' responsibility.

Providing a Full-Time Education

What should my child learn?

It is the parents' decision as to what and how their child learns—as long as that child is being prepared for life in today's society

and given the opportunity to achieve his or her full potential.

Is my child obliged to follow the National Curriculum?

Your child may be educated according to your own wishes, as long as you meet the suitability criteria referred to earlier. However, the National Curriculum does provide a very useful framework, especially if you intend to return your child to state education or to pursue formal qualifications such as GCSEs.

The National Curriculum is available on the Internet, and the core subjects are English, mathematics and science. ICT, history, geography, technology, art, music, citizenship, physical education and a modern foreign language are also studied.

Will my child have to take tests at each key stage, as in school?

Formal testing is not required.

How can my child take GCSE exams?

There are several options:

- ◇ Register as a private candidate and sit the exam at a local school
- ◇ Arrange for part-time attendance at college
- ◇ Use correspondence courses

How should I carry out EHE?

Education may be provided by the parents, small groups of home-educating families, or private tutors — or by any combination of these — or by any other means deemed suitable by the parent.

A good education is broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated, ensuring that children gain skills and knowledge to prepare them to meet their full potential and to live in and adapt to the challenges of our rapidly changing world.

BROAD: Include areas of specific interest to your child, in addition to English, maths, ICT and science.

BALANCED: Allocate enough time to each subject or activity on a regular basis to make an appropriate contribution.

RELEVANT: Teach subjects in a way that brings out their relevance to your child's own experience and give due emphasis to practical aspects.

DIFFERENTIATED: Match what is taught, and how it is taught, to your child's own ability and aptitude, and ensure the education is sufficiently challenging.

Some parents have a timetable showing the normal planned activities over a period of time such as you would find in a school. Others choose to follow a form of 'discovery' education, which focuses on the child's own interests. Yet others use a mixture of these methods. Irrespective of how your child's education is arranged, it will be up to you to show us evidence that the education being provided is suitable.

What advice does the LA provide during visits?

- ◇ Develop an indication of what your child will be doing, because it is helpful for most children to have some structure to their day. For example, many parents prepare a timetable which includes academic learning as well as activities outside normal school hours, such as participation in sporting activities in the evenings, attendance at religious meetings, work experience, etc.
- ◇ Include opportunities for your child to interact with other children, young people and adults, through experience of clubs, sports, special interests and religious groups, etc.
- ◇ Have your child keep a diary of what he or she learns.
- ◇ Keep files in date order of work done, both on paper and electronically.
- ◇ Cover literacy, numeracy, maybe some science if appropriate, ICT, physical exercise, and project work that interests the child.
- ◇ Employ a tutor if you can't cover the work by other means or

wish to use independent expertise. It is prudent for parents to take up appropriate references before engaging any tutor.

- ◇ Make use of Connexions and the library service.
- ◇ Buy additional educational books and materials from local bookshops.
- ◇ Use the Internet — see Resources on page 11.
- ◇ Consider part-time attendance at college if your child is at least 14.
- ◇ Use correspondence courses.

Must I be a qualified teacher?

No, you do not need a formal teaching qualification but do need to be well organised and have plenty of enthusiasm, commitment and energy if you plan to educate your child yourself.

Parents and other family members can all be involved in your child's education.

What expenses would we have to incur?

Many resources, such as the public library, are freely accessible to enable your child to receive a suitable education. However, the following are some of the expenses you may have to incur:

- ◇ Some resources and educational trips
- ◇ The services of a tutor or tutors
- ◇ Exam registration and any other assessment fees

Are grants available for EHE?

No funding is available to support home educators.

My child will soon no longer be of compulsory school age — what next?

You may wish to consider the option of further education or training at Darlington College, Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, Carmel College, or work-based learning, or to seek advice

about other options.

We would suggest you contact *Connexions*, where a personal advisor will be able to give you information, advice and guidance.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

What if my child has special educational needs?

If you think your child may have special educational needs or learning difficulties that call for special educational provision, please contact the SEN team, who will arrange for you to receive further advice from the relevant specialist service.

Please note that if your child already attends a special school and you wish to remove him or her in order to home educate, you should first seek our consent.

Gifted and Talented Children

Some EHE children are likely to be exceptionally able, and they may be able to access local and regional learning opportunities alongside pupils from local schools. During monitoring visits, parents may wish to discuss the most appropriate learning opportunities for their gifted and talented child.

Part-Time Employment of School-Aged Children

By law, children must be at least 13 years old and must obtain a work permit to work part-time. The type of work and hours that a young person can work are also restricted by law and by DBC's byelaws.

If your home-educated child plans to seek part-time employment, we would urge you to request the leaflet entitled *Information for Parents and Pupils About Part-Time Employment of School Aged Children* from the Child Employment Officer, who can be contacted in our Education Welfare Service — see *Contacts*.

Resources

Websites

The following provide useful information and material for EHE families:

- ◇ www.qca.org.uk (for the National Curriculum)
- ◇ www.teacherxpress.com
- ◇ www.dcsf.gov.uk
- ◇ www.bbc.co.uk/learning
- ◇ www.heas.org.uk (EHE support group — see below)

Public library

The library service is a useful source of educational materials and will allow extra withdrawals if they are told you are home educating.

Connexions

This service is available for home-educated children between the ages of 13 and 19 and is located behind the Dolphin Centre.

EHE support groups

There are several national organisations that support home educators. An Internet search using "home education" lists many of these organisations. Some of them also have local support networks. Two of the best known groups are Education Otherwise and the Home Education Advisory Service (HEAS).

Children's Services—Contacts

Connexions

7-9 Houndgate

Darlington DL1 5RF

Tel: 01325 480055

Email: askvibe@darlington.gov.uk

www.darlington.gov.uk/eVibe

Crown Street Central Library

Crown Street

Darlington DL1 1ND

Tel: 01325 462034

Email: crown.street.library@darlington.gov.uk

www.darlington.gov.uk/education

The following are based at the Town Hall, Darlington, DL1 5QT:

Education Welfare Service

Tel: 01325 388866

EHE Administrator

Tel: 01325 388805

Gifted and Talented Co-ordinator

Tel: 01325 388412

School Admissions Team

Tel: 01325 388067

Special Educational Needs Team

Tel: 01325 388817