



STOCKPORT

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

An introduction

This information is provided to help children, young people and their parents/carers to understand what may be involved if they are considering educating their child (ren) at home. It also clarifies the balance between the right of the parent to educate their child at home and the statutory responsibilities of the local authority (LA).

The following is a collection of issues that have been raised by families when considering home education and are included to assist you in making an informed decision whether home education is an appropriate alternative for your child (ren).

Q. Does my child have to attend school?

The responsibility for a child's education rests with their parents. In England, whilst education is compulsory, school is not. The Education Act 1996 states that *parents have a duty to secure an efficient full time education for their child, 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.*

In Stockport most parents carry out this duty by ensuring their child attends school. However, for a variety of reasons, a small number choose to educate their child (ren) themselves, that is to 'educate at home'. Parents may decide to home educate their child from a very early age and so the child may not have been previously enrolled at school. They may also elect to home educate at any other stage up to the end of compulsory school age. The law requires a child to be educated from the start of the school term following their fifth birthday until the last Friday in June in the school year in which the child reaches sixteen.

Q. What is 'efficient', 'full-time', 'suitable' education?

Efficient is not defined in the Education Act 1996 but has been broadly described in case law as an 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/she 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 life if he/she wishes to do so*".

Full-time education is not specified in relation to home education. In school children spend between 22 and 25 hours per week, according to age, engaged in learning activity and attend for 38 weeks a year. This measure of 'contact time' is not relevant to elective home education, and the type of education activity can be varied and flexible.

Q. If I decide to home educate my child (ren) what does that mean?

Children, whose parents elect to educate them at home, are not registered at mainstream schools, special schools, independent schools, academies, and Pupil Referral Units (PRU's), colleges, children's homes with educational facilities or, education facilities provided by independent fostering agencies. Parents retain the duty to ensure their child receives efficient full-time education, suitable to his/her age aptitude and ability, and to any special educational needs he/she

may have. They assume financial responsibilities for their children's education, including bearing the cost of any public examination and assessment of work by an accredited person.

Q. What if my child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or attends a Special School?

Parents' rights to educate their child (ren) at home applies equally where a child has SEN irrespective of whether the child has a statement of special educational needs or not. They retain the responsibility to ensure their child receives efficient full-time education, suitable to his/her age aptitude and ability, and to any special educational needs he/she may have. However, where a child attends a Special School, the consent of the LA is required before the school can remove the child's name from the register. The LA may ask for more information and should provide good reason if refusing consent.

The LA retains the duty to ensure the child's needs are met and to arrange the provision specified in the statement, unless the child's parent has made suitable provision, for as long as a statement is maintained.

Q. If I decide to home educate my child (ren) what should I do?

In the main, parents are not required to seek approval from the local authority to educate their child at home (except where the child attends a Special School). First contact between the LA and home educators often occurs when parents approach the school at which the child is registered to inform it of their decision to home educate. If possible parents should attempt to speak with the headteacher at the school: in any event it should be confirmed in writing. Whilst parents have no legal duty to inform the LA directly of the withdrawal of a child, they are encouraged to do so as it would help in keeping track of those children and young people who are being educated at home.

Q. What happens next?

Following written notification by parents, and in compliance with Pupil Registration Regulations, the school must delete the child's name from the Admissions Register and advise the LA, without delay, of the child's details and the grounds upon which their name is to be deleted from the register. This notification should be copied to the parents.

If a child is registered at a school as a result of a School Attendance Order the parents must get the Order revoked by the LA on the ground that arrangements have been made for the child to receive suitable education otherwise than at school, before the child can be deleted from the school's register and educated at home.

Q. What are the parent's responsibilities once the child's name has been removed from the school roll?

Parents are required to provide an efficient, full-time education suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of the child for as long as they are being educated at home. There is often continuous one-to-one contact and education may take place outside normal school hours. The type of education activity can be varied and flexible. 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
- observe school hours, days or terms

- give formal lessons
- mark work done by their child
- formally assess progress or set development objectives
- reproduce school type peer group socialisation
- match school-based, age-specific standards

With the continuing emphasis on children developing under the Every Child Matters (ECM) framework, parents may wish to take account of the five outcomes that form the cornerstone of the Children Act 2002:

- Being Healthy
- Staying Safe
- Enjoying and Achieving
- Making a Positive Contribution
- Achieving economic wellbeing

More information on this can be found on the every Child Matters website at:

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/>

There are many, equally valid approaches to educational provision and there is a reasonable expectation that the provision includes the following characteristics:

- consistent involvement of parents or other significant carers – it is expected that parents or significant carers would play a substantial role, although not necessarily constantly or, actively involved in providing education
- recognition of the child's needs, attitudes and aspirations
- opportunities for the child to be stimulated by their learning experiences
- access to resources/materials required to provide home education for the child – such as paper and pens, books and libraries, arts and crafts materials, physical activity, ICT and the opportunity for appropriate interaction with other children and adults.

Some parents may decide to teach the child themselves, or to make arrangements to plan and teach in small groups with other local families who are involved in home education. Alternatively, the family may elect to pay for private tutors. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that tutors/teachers are suitably qualified and have the required and up to date Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

Some home educators have a timetable showing the planned activities over a period of time. Others may prefer to follow a less 'defined' plan, where the specific interests of the child, for instance, are followed.

Whatever method is used it is up to the parent to demonstrate that the programme of work is helping the child to learn and that the child is developing according to his/her age, ability, aptitude and any special needs he/she may have. The interest of the LA is in establishing that suitable education is taking place, rather than endorsing a particular method.

Q. Do I have to follow the National Curriculum?

No. The National Curriculum applies only to maintained schools. However, you may wish to maintain some awareness of its content as it can provide a learning framework, especially if you

intend at some stage to return your child to state education or, pursue more formal qualifications, such as GCSE's.

The Core subjects of the National Curriculum are: English, Maths and Science. Other subjects are: History, Geography, Technology, Art, Music, Physical education, a modern language (from 11 years) and religious education (unless parents/carers exercise their right to withdraw a child). A copy of the National Curriculum is available on the Internet or from the Department of Children, schools and Families (DCSF).

Q. What if I am not a qualified teacher?

You do not need to have formal qualifications or, be a teacher, to educate your child at home. Qualities such as patience, enthusiasm and flexibility are valuable too.

Q. What are the Local Authority's responsibilities once the child's name has been removed from the school roll?

Parents have the right to educate their child (ren) at home; however, under Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996, local authorities have a duty to intervene if it appears that parents are not providing a suitable education. This section states that:

"If it appears to a local authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they shall serve a notice in writing on the parent requiring him to satisfy them within a period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education".

In order to comply with this duty, it is common practice for LA's to establish a program of annual meetings with parents/carers to support them with regards their responsibilities in providing a suitable education. The meetings will take place only when an appointment had been agreed and arranged in advance. Following these meetings a short report will be sent to parents.

If, after careful consideration of the information presented, the home education officer is not satisfied that a suitable education is being provided further support may be offered with the aim of helping parents overcome the difficulties within a mutually agreed time scale. This includes seeking any further information that they wish to provide which explains how they are providing a suitable education.

If, ultimately, the LA still considers a child is not receiving a suitable education, then it has a duty, under section 437(3) of the Education Act 1996, to issue a School Attendance Order. This will require a parent to send their child to a school named in the Order and failure to comply with the Order is an offence. Please note that at any stage during the issuing of such an Order a parent can present evidence to the LA that suitable education is being provided and apply to have the Order revoked.

Q. Can my child attend school part-time?

In Stockport children generally attend school full-time, except in exceptional circumstances. Parents can ask a school to consider 'flexible schooling' which is a perfectly legal, however, such an agreement is at the discretion of the Headteacher and governing body at the school as the responsibility for the delivery and assessment of the National Curriculum would remain theirs. Flexible schooling is often viewed by parents as an attractive alternative to full time schooling but there are many issues to consider. For further discussion / advice you can contact the EHE officer within the Local Authority.

Q. What if I decide to home educate then change my mind?

You can seek a place in a school at any time during the school year. Please be aware that if you have removed your child's name from a school roll a place may not be automatically available on request.

Q. What if I move house

Any changes to your child's circumstances you feel are important, particularly if you are moving into a different LA, you can contact the EHE officer.

Q. Are there any other things I may need to consider?

The decision to educate your child at home is a can be a major step for both parents and children. The following are things you might wish to think about:

- When considering whether to remove your child's name from a school roll find out as much information as you can first, and speak to the EHE officer in the LA. In this way you are more certain to make an informed choice.
- If you think that home education is the only solution to an ongoing disagreement with the child's school, talk to someone in the LA, perhaps the Education Welfare Service, who will be able to offer advice and support. Alternatively you can seek resolution through the Chair of Governors as part of the school complaint procedure. For more information about this you can visit the Council website.
- The change to being educated at home will be a big step for your child too: encourage them with lots of praise – as a parent/carer you have tremendous power and responsibility to strengthen your child's confidence, which is vital to learning.
- There are many reasons why parents elect to home educate their child (ren). However, it is rarely successful if used only as a short term measure to combat poor school attendance.
- Make use of your local library
- Keep a look out for special events and services across the borough
- Make use of museums, art galleries: children now have free admission in many places
- What kind of learning environment/opportunities are you able to provide your child

Checklist – what do I need to check before reaching a decision?

- your child is positive about the suggestion
- you are convinced it is the best course of action for your child
- you have the time to devote to your child's education
- you can ensure your child has access to appropriate resources
- you can provide a suitable working and learning environment for your child
- there are opportunities for physical exercise
- social experiences with other children and adults are provided

Support and Resources

Further information can be found via the following websites:

www.qca.org.uk

www.dcsf.gov.uk

www.connexions.gov.uk

www.education-otherwise.org/

www.heas.org.uk/

www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/ChoosingASchool/index.htm

www.parentscentre.gov.uk/

www.ace-ed.org.uk

www.nc.uk.net

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Elective Home Education Contact:

Barry Kirkman
Partnership Support Officer
Service Manager, Parents and Schools Support
Pupils, Parents and Schools service
Children and Young People's Directorate
Stopford House
Stockport SK1 3XE
Tel: 0161 474 3842
e-mail: barry.kirkman@stockport.gov.uk