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Elective home education parent information

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Introduction

Blackpool’s Children’s Services believe that generally, the best place to educate a child is in school but acknowledges your right to elect to educate your child at home in accordance with Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act. Home-based education is the “otherwise” part of the act and some parents choose to do this because they judge it to be the best way to carry out their duty to educate their child.

The intention of this booklet is to help you understand what may be involved if you are thinking of educating your child in this way. We hope it will help you to consider all the implications of Elective Home Education, explain the law as it applies to you and the Local Authority, how this works in Blackpool. One of the most important implications for electing to home educate is that all the financial responsibility for your child(ren)s learning is yours. Unfortunately there is no funding available from within the local authority to support your child’s education and exams unless they are on a school roll. The cost of books, equipment, educational visits and any costs for a tutor, if required, will be the responsibility of you the parent. You will be responsible for making the examination arrangements, which will include the selection of a centre and the examination board you feel best suits the needs of your child, and covering the cost of those examinations.

Application process, costs and timescales

Parents who choose to educate their children at home must be prepared to assume full financial responsibility, including bearing the cost of any public examinations.

The application process, costs and timescales may be different for each centre so please contact them direct to discuss your requirements.

As a guide, the approximate fee per GCSE and per IGCE is from £200 and Functional Skills (English, Math and IT) are £90 per subject, plus administration costs and invigilator costs where applicable. The cost of AS and A levels start from £200 per paper.

GCSEs, IGCSEs, AS and A Levels take place in the summer. The closing date for exam entries is usually in February, please contact the centre direct to check their deadlines.

Late entries can be accepted in March and April; however, late fees will apply (exam fee + 100% for late entries and exam fee + 200% for very late entries).

Functional skills examinations may be offered monthly, please contact the relevant centre for more details.

Access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special consideration

Access arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working. These arrangements allow candidates with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment without changing the demands of the assessment, for example, readers, scribes and Braille question papers.

Further information can be found on the Joint Council for Qualifications website. Some of the exam centres listed above may be able to facilitate access arrangements so please contact them to discuss individual cases.

Blackpool's Children's Services seeks to establish a good working relationship with parents who elect to home educate and, bearing in mind the wishes of the parent, will offer advice, though resources are limited. It is advisable in the first instance, that if at any time, you need to discuss a problem concerning the education of your child, please speak with school. If the problem is directly related to your child's attendance at school, please contact the Pupil Welfare Officer assigned to your child's school: please do not consider Elective Home Education as a means to avoid prosecution for non-attendance: legal proceedings, once begun, will continue whether your child continues to attend a particular school or not and will not be dropped simply because your child has been removed from a school roll. In the same way, no school should recommend or suggest Elective Home Education as a means of dealing with any issues within school. These might include: school non-attendance; behavioural issues; avoiding exclusion from school. Should you wish to discuss any aspect of Elective Home Education further, please contact School Admissions on the number given at the end of this booklet.

The information enclosed relates to the legal position of parents and guardians in taking on the responsibility for their child's education, as well as the duties of the Local Authority. To help you in making your decision, you may wish to consider some of the points further raised below and research some of the independent support agencies.

The decision to educate your child outside of mainstream education does not have to be a "once and for all" decision: you may move your child back into school after a time of educating at home. Dissatisfaction with your child's current school is not the best reason for considering elective home education. Schools do vary and we may well be able to find an alternative school that you feel is better suited to your child's needs. Please contact School Admissions, who may be able to help you to resolve any difficulties you may be experiencing on 01253 476712.

Before a decision is made to de-register your child from school, please consider the fact that schools are much more than places to gather knowledge: learning to socialise, establishing one's own self-worth in a community and getting on with others are important skills that may be hard to acquire at home. You may wish to consider how the education which you intend to provide will help your child to develop. These include: communication skills; observation/awareness skills; problem solving skills; creative and imaginative skills; literacy and numeracy skills; physical, personal and social skills.

Joint activities, collaborative learning and the stimulus of seeing other children's work are important features of school. Schools are also able to make extensive use of equipment that may not be available to you at home (Science/Technology laboratory/Art studio etc.). Should you choose to educate your child at home it is not compulsory for you to follow the National Curriculum but perhaps it would make sense to follow it broadly in case circumstances change and you wish your child to return to school.

Planning is useful and you are strongly encouraged to plan ahead, ensuring progression in learning for your child: please remember that his/her future progress becomes solely your responsibility.

Please consider the social side of growing up – contact with other children, joint activities and the stimulus of seeing other children's work is of real benefit in school life and aids the social development of children. There is evidence that children learn as much from each other as from teachers.

Whilst it is good for teenage children to get some experience of the world of work and earn additional pocket money, there are national laws and local bye-laws regarding permitted employment which regulate the type of work children can do and the hours they can work. Contact Blackpool Council - Work Permits for Children - Service Information for further information. The main points applying to children of statutory school age are that they may only work if they are: over the age of 13; are employed in 'light work' and have a licence issued by the local authority.

Does my child have to go to school to be educated?

Please always remember that "the responsibility for a child's education rests with the parents" and it is for this reason that section 7 of the Education Act 1996 imposes a duty on parents and guardians of children of compulsory school age (5-16) to:"cause him/her to receive efficient, full-time education suitable (a) to age, ability and aptitude and (b) to any special educational needs he or she may have, either by regular attendance at school, or otherwise" Parents and guardians must always remember that, in England, "Education" is compulsory and the responsibility for a child's education rests with their parents. Failure to provide this whilst undertaking Elective Home Education is illegal and would deem your child to be a "Child Missing Education" and therefore could result in your child having to return to school as the Local Authority would have to intervene: please read the following section re: the legal responsibility of the local authority.

What is the legal responsibility of the local authority?

Under Sections 437, 443 and 444 of the 1996 Education Act the Local Education Authority is required to ensure that children are receiving a suitable education. This means that there is a legal responsibility on Children's Services to ensure that you are providing efficient, full-time and suitable education for your child appropriate to his/her age, aptitude and ability and with regard to any special educational need he/she may have.

Clarification of terms

- Efficient education – This is not defined in the Act. Each case has to be judged according to the child's need and the educational provision made. However, this phrase does not mean that school subjects have to be provided. Parents or guardians should show that the opportunities being provided are helping the child to learn and that the development and learning taking place within the home are appropriate to "age, ability and aptitude" and taking into account any special educational needs they have
- Full-time – The length of time is not specified. To help you decide please consider that children in school spend approximately 23 to 25 hours on work each week, plus homework, according to age. Children in state maintained schools attend for 38 weeks a year
- Regular attendance at school – Section 444(3) (a) of the 1996 Education Act states that any school age child who attends school must attend regularly. The school may authorise education off site, but would keep responsibility for the child's educational progress
- Or Otherwise – This phrase is not defined in law, but would include being taught at home by parents, use of correspondence courses or by private tutors

What if my child has an Education, Health and Care Plan?

If your child has an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) of special educational needs, you are still entitled to provide education at home. You can withdraw your child from the mainstream school named on the plan/statement. However, you need to be able to show that the provision you make can meet your child's special educational needs. If a special school is named, the consent of the Local Authority is required before the child's name may be removed from the school roll. It is therefore advisable to continue to send your child to school until your application for removal has been acknowledged. In all cases, Children's Services has a duty to maintain the EHCP and to review it annually.

How do I go about withdrawing my child from school?

Below school age – It would help us to keep our records accurate if you would inform School Admissions, Children's Services (01253 476474) of your intention to educate your child at home from commencement of their statutory school age.

Of school age – If your child is already registered as a pupil at a Blackpool school, you must inform the head teacher in writing of your intention to take full responsibility for your child's education and as such you will educate him/her at home from a particular date and request that your child's name be removed from the school roll. You should ask for written confirmation that this has been done. If you do not do this, your child's absence from school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and will be treated as such. Once a de-registration letter has been received by a school, the school will inform School Admissions of your intention. It would be very helpful if you could contact School Admissions to inform us of your intention to educate your child at home with effect from a certain date; initial contact can be made via telephone 01253 476712. Please give your child's name, date of birth and the name of the school concerned. A member of the team, the Elective Home Education Officer, will contact you to discuss your decision, offer advice and guidance and arrange a meeting.

If your child is already being educated at home and you have just moved into Blackpool – Please inform us of your child's name, date of birth and your previous and current address. We will contact you and you will be asked to complete the form EHE 1a, enclosed with these guidelines, in order to give an outline of your planned educational provision.

What if I don't inform you of my decision?

It is helpful if parents inform us since, for the sake of the child's education, we must satisfy ourselves that parents are fulfilling their responsibilities to provide a full time education, suitable to their child's age, ability and aptitude. If school admissions are not aware of your intention to elect to home educate or has not received evidence of the education you are providing within the home, the children missing education officer will, together with a Police Officer, call at your home for a 'safeguarding visit'. They will ask you to show evidence of the arrangements you have been making for your child's education. They will then notify School Admissions accordingly. It is also helpful for parents to have their child's name on the Elective Home Education register, for example during truancy sweeps, since pupils on the register receive an annual card from the team for proof should you be stopped whilst out during school hours with your child.

How will the education access officer ensure that the provision is suitable?

The director of children's services has a responsibility to ensure that you are providing efficient, full-time education for your child. Soon after we are informed of your intention to home educate, the education access officer will contact you either by phone, email or letter to offer you an appointment to discuss your educational plans going forward. It would therefore assist the officer greatly if you could complete the enclosed Form EHE 1A: this will enable you to present a clear outline of the education programme you have planned for your child. We would ask that this be revised and updated annually.

What happens if the education I am providing is deemed to be unsuitable?

If the quality of the education you are providing is deemed to be at a level unsuitable to meet the needs of your child, you will be advised why and you will be given time to adjust your child's educational provision before a further meeting is arranged. We do not intend to be restrictive about how you teach your child. As parents, we hope you will understand the local authority's statutory/legal responsibility to ensure that the educational needs of all children are being met and that appropriate progress is being made under section 7 of the 1996 Education Act. Unfortunately, if no improvement is seen, discussion will take place re: a return to school. This could result in a School Attendance Order being imposed by the pupil welfare service if an agreement cannot be reached between you and the local authority officer.

What kind of evidence would be helpful?

A written programme of work would be a good starting point for discussion. A selection of samples of the child's work also gives a good indication of progress over time, as well as current achievements and attainment. Please remember to date all written work done.

The kind of questions the officer is likely to ask may include the following:

- What role are you playing in providing your child's education?
- Have you provided a suitable working space for your child?
- How are you planning to ensure that your child receives a broad and balanced range of learning experiences?
- Have you made long term plans for the whole year? How do these relate to what you have planned in the next few weeks?
- Have you thought about how subjects or topics will link together?
- Have you planned a mixture of work so that your child has experience of both practical and written work?
- Have you made available the resources and materials your child needs?
- Who or what will you use to help you?
- What arrangements have you made for your child to interact with other children and adults?
- In what way will you keep a record of your child's progress or difficulties?
- How will you decide whether you are being successful?
- Have you considered whether the programme you have put together will lead to future further/higher education?

How should I organise teaching and learning?

Home educators are not required to follow the national curriculum but there are sound reasons for consulting it. It will help you to decide how broad your provision should be; how deeply to go into the various subjects; what you might teach to a child at a particular age and so on. Copies of the national curriculum are available for reference at all public libraries, on the internet or from the Department for Education.

There is no one style or approach that can be recommended but it should be as active and practical as possible. Opportunities to take advantage of all available resources would be sensible. Great importance should be placed on reading and educational visits should be planned. Public information is available through libraries, the internet and educational TV broadcasting: these should be included in

your planning and preparation.

Variety in style, content and the processes involved will make the learning experience more enjoyable and help to sustain your child's interest. Opportunities need also to be given for independent study and research and a quiet area for this should be provided.

Activities that provide the opportunity to mix with and relate to other children in work and play and away from the home are very important to a child's development and these should also be included in your planning.

To assess whether or not children are making the kind of progress of which they are capable, regular testing of attainment is available to children in schools. It is important that you too have a way of assessing your child to check that progress is being made. This can be done by recording what your child has achieved and dating and marking the work they have done but is not compulsory.

N.B. from time to time parents may wish to engage tutors to teach their children. Our advice is to be very careful in this process and ensure that you seek references. Please contact the education access officer who, whilst unable to recommend any specific tutors, will be able to advise on any problems/ queries you may have.

How will I know whether what I intend to deliver is suitable?

The elective home education officer will discuss with you at the meeting whether or not the provision you intend to deliver is generally suitable. The feedback may also include areas for consideration, giving recommendations to consider in addition to the provision you are already making for your child's educational, social and personal development.

The officer will advise if there are areas of concern with any aspect of your provision and you will also be informed in writing. You will be given a reasonable time to act on recommendations made and a further meeting with the officer will be arranged.

If the officer finds the provision to be unsuitable for your child in regard to his/her age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have, a re-integration back into mainstream education may be suggested and the education access officer will support you to that end. Very occasionally, the officer may be obliged to work with the pupil welfare service to apply for a Statutory School Attendance Order under Sections 437-444 of the 1996 Education Act. A school will be nominated on the order: if you wish, you may request an alternative. Once the order has been served, it is your duty to arrange for your child to be admitted to and attend the school named so that he/she can receive a suitable education.

How often will I be visited by the elective home education officer?

We hope to establish a good working relationship with families. As soon as your written intention to home educate is received, a meeting will be offered. Please be assured that no meeting with the elective home education officer will take place unless you have agreed to one and an appointment has been made either by telephone, email or in writing in advance.

What is flexi-schooling?

This is an arrangement between the parent and the school, where the child is registered at school in the normal way but where the child attends the school only part time; the rest of the time the child is home-educated. The school maintains responsibility for the child and the flexible nature of attendance. Flexi-schooling is a legal option but not a right: you would need to negotiate an agreement with the headteacher/principal at the school your child is registered at. The agreement to allow flexi-schooling rests with the decision of the headteacher/principal who is not legally bound to grant flexi-schooling. When your child is not in school they are considered to be absent from school and would therefore have an absence in the school's register even though you would be providing education for them at home.

Some final considerations

As previously mentioned, elective home education is not a solution to the problem of getting a reluctant child to school. If this is an element in the consideration of Elective Home Education, you should initially engage with the school's allocated pupil welfare/attendance officer, who would be happy to help a child and family in this situation to secure a good attendance pattern at school.

You may be considering sending your child to school at a later date after a period of elective home education for example at the beginning of a key stage in his/her education. This has the advantage of getting your child specialist teaching in preparation of external examinations. It can, however, cause problems if the curriculum followed at home is very different from the national curriculum.

Some parents who decide to home educate find it to be a happy and constructive experience. For all parents it is, as you have read, an enormous challenge to undertake. If you decide to go ahead with it, Blackpool children's services will work with you as far as is possible

to ensure that you provide suitable education for your child. Please help us to establish and maintain a good working partnership.

If, at any time, you wish your child to (re)enter the state school system, please contact the elective home education officer and/or the school admissions service who will be happy to help and advise you. You may also rescind your de-registration letter should you feel that you have “made a mistake” in opting for elective home education. Please be aware however that places in schools are often snapped up as soon as one child leaves. It would perhaps be better to discuss the positive and the negative aspects of this educational route before you de-register your child from school.

After reading this Information for parents booklet, you decide that you do wish to proceed with educating your child at home, please remember that you have a duty to notify your child's Headteacher, in writing, of your intention. It would be helpful to us if you could fill in form EHE 1a, enclosed with this information, and return it to:

Elective home education officer
School admissions
People's department
Blackpool Council
Number One Bickerstaffe Square
Blackpool
FY1 3AH

Post to: Blackpool Council
PO Box 4
Blackpool
FY1 1NA

If you change your address

If you move house, please inform school admissions on 01253 476446 or 01253 476833.

How to complain

If you have a complaint regarding any element of elective home education please telephone or write to:

Schools organisation and admissions manager
Business Support and Resources
People's Department
Blackpool Council
No. One Bickerstaffe Square
Blackpool
FY1 3AH

Post to: Blackpool Council
PO Box 4
Blackpool
FY1 1NA

Telephone: 01253 476637

Please note: Blackpool Children's Services, is not ‘recommending’ any of the private organisations by including the contact details in the following list. The list is not exhaustive but it may provide further advice and support for home educating families.

- [Advisory Centre for Education \(ACE\) Ltd](#), 36 Nicholay Road, London N19 3EZ Tel: 020 8407 5142
- [AQA](#) – Education charity providing GCSEs, A-levels and support Telephone: 0800 197 7162 Email: eos@aqa.org.uk
- [BBC Education](#): A huge site, offering advice on many aspects of education. Resources and support, education programs linking to other sites of interest and links to other organisations involved in education otherwise than at school. [The web guide brings you the newest and best websites for learning at home.](#)
- [Catholic Home-Schooling Network](#) (CHSN), PO Box 52, Skegness PE25 2UR
- [Education Otherwise](#), PO Box 325, KINGS LYNN, PE34 3XW, Helpline: 0845 478 6345
- [Education Today](#)- offers up-to-date information on what is happening in schools and education generally.
- [Home Education Advisory Service](#), PO Box 98, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL8 6AN Tel: 01707 371854.

- [Kip McGrath Education Centres](#). Professional tutoring.
- [The Dyslexia Institute](#) - For information if you suspect your child may have these difficulties

Examining boards

The main examining boards in the UK are:

- Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) Devas Street, Manchester, M15 6EX. Tel: 0161 953 1180
Email: mailbox@qa.org.uk
- [Cambridge International Exams](#)
- [Edexcel](#). First Floor, The Lighthouse, 14 The Quays, Salford, Manchester, M50 3BF Telephone: 0161 855 7560, Fax: 0161 855 7570 Email: Manchester@edexcel.com Website: [Edexcel official site](#):
- OCR Information Bureau Vocational Qualifications, Progress House, Westwood Way, Coventry, CV4 8JQ Tel: 02476 851 509
Email: vocational.qualifications@ocr.org.uk
- [Oxford Cambridge and RSA Exams](#) (OCR) including [Functional Skills in English, maths and IT](#) Telephone: 01223 553998
Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk
- [QCA](#)

All these bodies will be able to provide advice on how to obtain syllabi for external examinations, exams that can be taken which do not require course work, and how to enter for examinations as a private candidate.

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