Welcome to Elective Home Education

Doncaster Council - working alongside families in their learning journey
Whether you are considering home education or have already embarked on your journey we hope you find the following information helpful.

Our statement to you...

• We appreciate that parents/carers have choices on how and where to educate their children.
• We respect there are different methods of providing a suitable education.
• We acknowledge mainstream schooling is not suitable or desirable for everyone.
• We understand that parents don’t want us ‘watching over’ and continually monitoring them or their child.
• We know most parents provide a wonderful, interesting and varied education for their children.
• We know that most home educated children are happy, healthy and receiving a solid and appropriate education which will prepare them well for their future.

We know that many parents can be wary of Local Authority involvement but our Elective Home Education (EHE) officers meet many families with very varied reasons for educating their children ‘otherwise’. We can provide support and advice by working alongside families wherever we can.

Doncaster Council wants to work closely with home educators to ensure that they have the service they want.

There will be regular consultation to discuss resources, ideas, new plans and give us first-hand information as to how we can help to give continued support to local EHE families.

In addition Doncaster Local Authority Participation and Transition Service will offer support to young people educated at home from age 14.

What we will not do

• We will never tell you what you are doing is wrong. Our role is to offer advice and support.
• We will never demand to see your child/children.
• We will not turn up at your door unannounced.

In addition Doncaster Local Authority Participation and Transition Service will offer support to young people educated at home from age 14.
However - if you will let us...

- We would love to be part of your continuing educational journey. Our officers can offer advice on newly available resources and information which might be relevant to the age range or abilities of your child/children.
- We would love to see or discuss educational aspects that your child has experienced - it's confirmation to us that a suitable education is being provided and it's always nice to see children's achievements.
- We would also like to hear from children to see if we can help them in any way.

What’s your route?

Parents and carers come to EHE from many different routes. Some parents prefer to EHE from the start so their children have never experienced mainstream school. Other families decide to EHE at some time after their child has attended school. To some families EHE is really natural, to others it might be a struggle to know where to start. If your child is attending school and you have chosen to home educate it is necessary that you ensure that your child is de-registered from school. This means that your child’s name is taken off the school register. This is actually a very simple process.

The Headteacher must remove a child’s name from the school roll on receipt of a written request by the parent advising the Headteacher of their intention to home educate. If your child is on roll at a special school the procedure is different as the local authority has to agree to removal from roll.

Upon receipt of the letter the Headteacher will inform Doncaster Council and we will write to you to offer you the opportunity to access advice and support.

Financial Implications

Usually, if you elect to home educate your child, you do not receive any help with funding from the Government.

If you have chosen to de-register, or have never registered your child, the Local Authority has no duty to arrange educational provision at home. When considering home education it’s important to consider how you will fund all aspects of the education, including exams.
Approaches to Home Education

We know that methods are very varied and yet, in the most part, home educating families tend to fall somewhere between structured and autonomous (see below). It’s not uncommon to start with certain ideas and routines and then change things as time goes on. It’s usually a regular learning process for parents as well as children!

Structured

This is teaching in a formal manner with a fixed timetable that usually keeps school hours and school term times. Sometimes the National Curriculum is followed. Sometimes a structured approach is the child’s choice particularly if the child has previously had some years at school prior to being home educated.

Autonomous

Families do not have to follow the national curriculum or a timetable, thus allowing far greater flexibility. Usually the child determines the areas of study also deciding how, when and what to learn. There is usually more focus on using individual interests or natural curiosity.

What do you HAVE to do?

If you have decided to EHE your child then you do have a legal duty to ensure that your child receives an effective and suitable education. You can do this any way you want to and there are many ways and descriptions for the method chosen. It all depends on choice and the age and abilities of your child but here are a few of the most common:

Living-Learning

Where everything in everyday life is a learning experience. Learning about science can simply be informal chatting about nature, plants and growth during a walk in the woods. Simple maths fractions can be incorporated simply by cutting a cake in slices for six people (1/6th of a whole!) Turning on a bedside lamp can open up learning questions about power sources, electricity and energy. This is child led and simply directed by the educator.

Flexi-study

This is, usually, set timetables to learn and also using ‘living learning’ Children have an informal timetable which concentrates on written and verbal learning and learn the practical side of things while ‘living learning’. This type of study is particularly helpful if you want to concentrate slightly more in one area than another. It is still important to give a full and balanced education though.

Internet Schooling

In this modern world of course we must not forget Internet schools. These are safe and monitored virtual classrooms where children are taught either fixed or variable timetabled lessons - this may broadly follow the national curriculum and children would normally take IGCSE exams. This is normally term time in line with schools.

Distance learning

There are many courses available which provide teaching support with assignments being completed and then sent to the course teachers and formally marked.
This educational method is usually for children aged 11+. These types of courses are usually finalised with the student taking IGCSE exams once the course is finished.

**School at Home**

This is what it says, set lessons, set times, following the National Curriculum but at home. Of course you are not likely to have a science lab in your shed, a gymnasium in the wardrobe, or a drama room going spare, but this type of learning is much more like the traditional idea of schooling, just ‘at home’. Its worth remembering that the examples given are just a tiny representation of the way families choose to home educate. In our experience families don’t follow any specific route as home education is a very personal experience. Most home educators will agree that what works for one family may not work for another. The most important point is that to home educate, you really, really have to WANT to - well most of the time, anyway, we all have our off days!

Home-education can change with the ebb and flow of family life as children, their interests and their needs, change and grow. One size most certainly does not fit all and one of the benefits of home education is that you can alter the fit as needed.

A varied range of subjects should be included in your educational provision such as maths, reading, writing, sciences, geography, history, and educational discussion to name a few. Of equal importance, are sports and exercise, music and art. Most experienced home educators suggest that it helps if you can keep your eyes open for opportunities and every day occurrences that can open up doors for observation and discussion.

Learning can and should be fun and enjoyable and it can be a very steep learning curve, not so much for the children, but for their parents and/or adults involved in the children’s life. There is no requirement for home educators to follow the National Curriculum (although some do). Children learn at different stages and ages so milestones can be varied.

The Elective Home Education Officer will always be available to offer advice and can provide you with information on home education groups if you would find that reassuring.
A varied range of subjects should be included in your educational provision such as reading, writing, maths, sciences, geography and history to name a few.

There is a varied diversity amongst Doncaster Home Educators and many meet regularly and arrange social or educational visits to museums or places of interest. There are lots of resources available on the Internet from formal worksheets to arts and crafts sites and we have listed a few of them at the end of this booklet.

**Exams**

Home educated children can take some examinations as fee-paying private candidates and may, for example, take GCSE’s, IGCSE’s or Open University courses.

It can be difficult to find somewhere to sit exams. However, some schools and colleges will accept external candidates. Doncaster Council will provide information on educational establishments who accept external candidates.

**Why is it all so important?**

We’re sure that your goals are the same as ours - that all children stay happy, enjoy growing up, remain safe, and receive a suitable education which will set them on the road to a successful career and a happy and productive life. When the decision to home educate is made by parents it is up to them to decide how they deliver that education. They are not required to follow the National Curriculum or to keep to specific school hours.
However, parents are required by law to ensure their child receives an efficient full time education, suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. You may find that if your child has previously attended school there will need to be a period of adjustment, it's sometimes called ‘de-schooling’. Similarly your child might be used to structured lessons and will feel more comfortable with that same basis for home education. You may decide that you do not wish to follow any structure, but would prefer that your child sets their own learning choices. Whatever method you choose there is really only one basic rule - if you are choosing to home educate then parents must provide an efficient full time education which is suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of the child.

We ask Home Educators to provide us with information about the type of education that will be offered. This can be supplied in one or more of the following ways:

1. A personal meeting (at your home or another venue) with our Elective Home Education Officer.
2. By completing our information form.
3. Writing a report.
4. Writing a letter about your education philosophy.
5. Showing examples of educational experience (photos, essays etc).
6. Gaining endorsement from a third party.

### Three suggested elements to Educational Philosophies

(Courtesy of Fiona Nicholson www.edyourself.org)

a) The Belief Statement. This is your “philosophy of education” or the values which are important to you and your family

b) The List of Resources used in your day to day home education

c) How you are putting your beliefs into practice. (Also Known as “The Report”) Give examples of how your home education works in practice. Many families also find it useful to keep a record when they first start home educating, to remind themselves of all that they are doing on a daily basis.

### Updates

As your child grows it is likely that your provision will too and with this in mind we contact each EHE family either annually or more regularly if requested. It is important that we mention that it is not a legal requirement for home educators to provide regular updates to us. However we do feel that it helps us to understand where we could provide services to home educators or highlight existing services which may be useful.

With this in mind we offer many ways for exchange of information:

1. A meeting with the Officer so that we can keep you updated on any new support services and you can let us know how things have been progressing since our last contact.
2. A letter or revised Educational Philosophy.
3. Further Examples of the educational experience.
What’s the different between EHE (Elective Home Education) and CME (Children Missing Education)?

Every child is entitled by law to an education either by regular attendance at school or ‘otherwise’. Every LA has a duty to ensure that children are not missing education and so need to ascertain that a child falls under the umbrella of EHE and not CME.

Why is it all so important?

Every child has a right to an education. Parents can make choices on how that is delivered but legally it has to be education that is “efficient” - it achieves what it sets out to achieve and “suitable” - it prepares the child for life in society as full and equal citizens and also enables the child to achieve his/her full potential.

We’re sure that your goals are the same as ours - that all children stay happy, stay safe, enjoy growing up, remain safe and receive a suitable education which will set them on the road to a successful career and a happy and productive life.

Is there a negative side to EHE?

We have listened to some of the concerns from existing EHE parents and children. These are a few which you may find interesting.

My child seems to have lost interest in education and sometimes it can be difficult to spark their interest at all. What shall I do?

Why not try a completely different approach. For example, one EHE child was just not interested in history at all. Then a surprise trip to the cinema to see ‘The Kings Speech’ ended in a four week project on the Royal Kings and Queens of England! This led to deeper interest in specific time periods in history and some very detailed and dedicated research with continued interest.

I’m finding it difficult to get my child to exercise.

As EHE parents it’s easy to not take into account the actual timetabled physical education lessons your child no longer has. When you also factor in walking to and from school, walking between classrooms and playing/running at break times that’s a lot of missed exercise! Motivation is the key, exercise can also be fun, ice skating, swimming, or just walking the dog and throwing a ball is all exercise.

What about suggesting an art lesson in the woods, a long walk, a rest while sketching, then a brisk walk back home.

I’m concerned that my child is not socialising enough with other children of similar ages. What can I do?

This might be a good time to join a local club. Find a list of local clubs offering a subject you think your child would be interested in. Drama clubs, Scouts, Guides, Karate clubs, the likelihood is that friendships will be forged. You could also look for local groups of home educators.
Progress enquiries from the Local Authority

Sometimes we receive information, that makes it appear that parents are not providing a suitable education, obviously we have to check this information. The first thing we do is simply conduct informal enquiries by asking you - so that we can satisfy our own legal requirements. This type of enquiry is not the same as a formal notice under section 437(1), and is not necessarily a precursor for formal procedures. Parents are under no duty to respond to such enquiries, but we hope you will. Obviously we can’t ‘forget about it’ or put the file to the bottom of the pile if we don’t get any answer - we have to follow up and sometimes of course we do have to take further steps to ensure that a child receives a suitable education, but this would be our last resort.

We would love to work and learn from more experienced home educators as it really does help us to decide whether we need to make changes to our procedures.

With this in mind it is very helpful if we have annual contact with you so that you can provide a brief update. Our aim is to build a solid relationship with all Home Education families, so that we can say that every Home Educated child in Doncaster is happy, healthy and learning well.

Helpful Resources

Many websites are available to help home educators. These sites range from free information and ideas, to paid for worksheets. The links below are some that have been used by other Doncaster EHE families.

Ed Yourself
www.edyourself.org

Doncaster Home Education Group
www.doncasterhomeeducation.blogspot.co.uk/

Ideas for home schooling
www.homeschooling-ideas.com

Education Otherwise
www.educationotherwise.net

Home Education Advisory service
www.heas.org.uk

HE Special (Home Education Children with Special Education Needs)
www.he-special.org.uk
www.home-education.org.uk
Parents may decide to exercise their right to home educate their child from a very early age and so the child may not have been previously enrolled at school.

**Library**

There are many libraries in and around Doncaster and they are all free to join. Many libraries offer access to a computer with Internet access. Home Educators can now have access to the schools library service at a cost of £50 per year.

**Internet schools:**
- www.interhigh.co.uk
- www.briteschool.co.uk
- www.firstcollege.co.uk

**Distance Learning:**
- www.oxfordhomeschooling.co.uk
- www.nec.ac.uk/info
- www.ukopencollege.co.uk
The Legal bits

The law relating to Elective Home Education:

The responsibility for a child’s education rests with their parents. In England, education is compulsory, but school is not.

Article 2 of Protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights states that:

“No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.”

Parents have a right to educate their children at home. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 provides that:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable -

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and (b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”

The responsibility for a child’s education rests with his or her parents. An “efficient” and “suitable” education is not defined in the Education Act 1996 but “efficient” 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 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 form of life if he wishes to do so”.

Parental rights and responsibilities

Parents may decide to exercise their right 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. Parents are not required to register or seek approval from the local authority to educate their children at home. 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. However, local authorities are encouraged to provide support where resources permit.

Parents must also ensure that their children receive a suitable full-time education for as long as they are being educated at home.

Local authorities have a statutory duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996, inserted by the Education and Inspections Act 2006, to make arrangements to enable them to establish the identities, so far as it is possible to do so, of children in their area who are not receiving a suitable education. The duty applies in relation to children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, and who are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than being at school (for example, at home, privately, or in alternative provision). The guidance issued makes it clear that the duty does not apply to children who are being educated at home.

Local Authorities have no statutory duties in relation to monitoring the quality of home education on a routine basis. However, under Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996, Local Authorities shall intervene if it appears that parents are not providing a suitable education. This section states that:

“If it appears to a Local Education 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 the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.”

Section 437(2) of the Act provides that the period shall not be less than 15 days beginning with the day on which the notice is served. Prior to serving a notice under section 437(1), Local Authorities are encouraged to address the situation informally.

The most obvious course of action if the Local Authority has information that makes it appear that parents are not providing a suitable education, would be to ask parents for further information about the education they are providing. Such a request is not the same as a notice under section 437(1), and is not necessarily a precursor for formal procedures. Parents are under no duty to respond to such enquiries, but it would be sensible for them to do so.