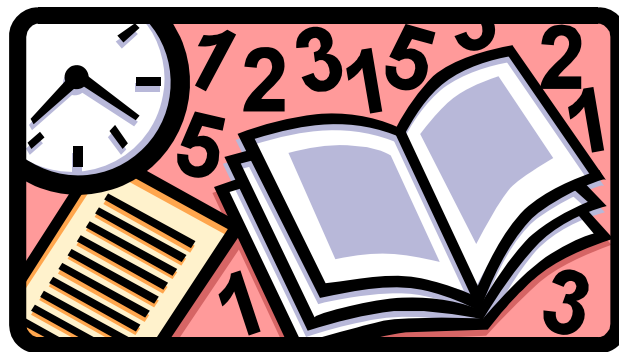


Children, Young People and Families

EDUCATION OTHERWISE THAN AT SCHOOL

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS/CARERS



September 2007

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet has been written to help you understand what may be involved if you are thinking of educating your child away from the school system.

It outlines the procedure to be followed by parents or carers who decide to educate their child or children at home. It also covers the systems put in place by Oldham Local Authority (Children, Young People and Families) to fulfil their responsibilities in this situation.

We recognise that there are a variety of ways in which education can be provided but we would like you consider the issues before coming to a decision. Deciding to educate at home is a major step that will require a great deal of commitment from you as far as time and energy are concerned. Depending on the age of your child, it may be useful to discuss your plans and listen to their point of view. Consider any costs that may be involved – equipment, books, tutors, exams etc. Give consideration to the social side of education; contact with other young people, joint activities and the stimulus of seeing the work of other children are the benefits of school life which help the overall development of individual children.

A decision to educate at home should not be made solely to resolve a particular problem in school. Discuss the problem with the Head teacher in the first instance, or write to the Governors, or speak to someone at the Local Authority (LA) at the Civic Centre.

Useful contacts are;

Pupil Service
Level Six
Civic Centre,
West Street,
Oldham OL1 1XJ Tel; 0161 770 3158

Electing to educate your child at home is a challenge. However, having considered the information provided, if you choose this option we will do what we can to try to ensure you are able to provide a good education. Please help us to maintain a good working partnership.

SECTION 1 LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PARENTS

Does my child / children have to go to school?

The 1996 Education Act states that it is the duty of parents to secure an appropriate education for their children.

A parent may provide this education;

- by ensuring the child's regular attendance at school; or
- otherwise

For most children in Oldham this means that they will attend a local school but, for various reasons, a small number of parents decide to undertake the responsibility of educating their children outside the school system.

How many parents in Oldham educate their children at home?

There are approximately 30 children out of a total school age population of around 40,000 being educated by their parents in Oldham;

- some parents take on this responsibility themselves
- some parents work with other parents/neighbours and /or private tutors
- some parents use materials and ideas from outside agencies such as Education Otherwise

What is a parent's duty?

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 every parent of a child of compulsory school age shall cause him(her) 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 attendance at school or otherwise.

What do the words 'efficient' and 'suitable' education mean?

This is not defined in the Act and each case has to be judged according to the child's needs and the educational provision made. Parents will have to show that the programme of education is helping that child to develop according to his(her) age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs he(she) may have. A home education programme does not need to be the same as 'lessons' which are provided in school i.e. the National Curriculum does not have to be followed.

Education is likely to be considered:

- **'efficient'** - if it enables a child to achieve his/her full potential; and
- **'suitable'** - if it prepares a child for a full and active life in society

What is 'full-time education'?

There is no definition of full time education within the Act. It is difficult to compare the hours of teaching delivered within a school setting with the time spent on home education, which is often on a one-to-one basis.

SECTION 2 PLANNING A HOME EDUCATION PROGRAMME

What is a home education programme?

A home education programme is everything that a parent does to educate their child. It should cater for a child's all round development, and should be:

- Broad:** it should introduce the pupil to a wide range of knowledge, understanding and skills
- Balanced:** each part should be allotted sufficient time to make its special contribution but not so much that it squeezes out other essential parts of the learning
- Relevant:** subjects should be taught so as to bring out their applications to the pupil's own experience and to adult life and to give due emphasis to practical aspects
- Differentiated:** what is taught and how it is taught need to be matched to the pupil's ability and aptitude. It should also be suitably challenging so that a child can show that some progress is being made.

A successful home education programme may offer a suitable education where parents;

- ensure that their child develops reading and other basic skills appropriate to his/her age
- are involved in planning and providing the programme
- include different subject areas – each of which is allocated time in the programme
- take advantage of the resources which are available, for example, museums, T.V., sports centres, youth organisations
- provide opportunities for independent study and provide a quiet area for study work
- provide opportunities which encourage physical activity (for example, swimming) and allow a child to mix with other children and adults.
- cover key skills

What if my child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs?

Where a child has a statement of Special Educational Needs and a parent begins home education, the LA's statutory duty to undertake an annual review still continues. Parents will have to show they can provide for the special needs and the LA has a legal duty to ensure that these needs are met.

Parents wishing to begin home education with a child registered at a Special School must seek the consent of the LA in order to withdraw the child from school.

Must a home education programme follow the National Curriculum?

The National Curriculum only applies in schools.

However, if you may decide to re-integrate your child into a school in the future this would be more straightforward if your home education programme takes into account the National Curriculum.

The Curriculum in all Oldham schools is:

- broad and balanced
- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils; and
- prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

Children educated in state schools follow nationally defined curricula. For children educated at home there is no requirement to follow this guidance, but it can be useful when you are planning your home education programme.

A home education programme does not need to follow a set of 'lessons' or 'timetable', but parents often find it useful to develop a plan or a framework to structure what they intend to do.

It is your own responsibility to plan and carry out your arrangements.

SECTION 3 MONITORING HOME EDUCATION IN OLDHAM

What are the LA responsibilities?

The LA has a duty to ensure that parents are providing efficient and suitable education for your child. LA's have no right of access to a parent's home. However parents may, if they wish, permit access to their home, or offer an alternative venue for a meeting. Alternatively, parents can send details of the educational programme in writing to the LA. Many parents whose children have never been to school are unknown to their LA and therefore have no monitoring. However, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) "*believes that positive relationships and mutual respect between local authorities and parents is the best way of ensuring that the best interests of the child are safeguarded*".

How do I go about it?

If your child is below compulsory school age then you do not need to do anything but it would help us to maintain accurate records if you wrote to let us know you intend to educate your child at home when he (she) is of compulsory school age, with details of their name and date of birth.

If your child is already registered with an Oldham school, you should write to the Head teacher informing them of your intention to educate at home. They are required to pass on this information to the LA.

If your child is already being educated at home and you move into Oldham, please contact the LA to let us know.

What if I don't inform the LA, but just keep my child at home?

This will mean that you are not complying with the requirements of the legislation. Oldham LA must satisfy itself that parents are fulfilling their duties. If you do not provide evidence, either in writing or through a visit, the LA may conclude that your child's education is not effective and we would then take steps to get your child back in school.

How will the LA ensure that the provision is satisfactory?

Once we are informed of your decision to educate at home, we will make initial contact to ensure you are aware of the implications and to ascertain how you would like us to contact you in future. The Advisory Teacher for EAH will then contact you after six weeks to discuss home education and check that your plans are satisfactory. Ideally this would take place during a home visit, but if you prefer it can be arranged at a mutually convenient venue. This is not intended to be intimidating in anyway, but supportive. Please remember, we have a legal duty to ask for evidence of suitable provision. Alternatively you can send evidence of your educational plans and samples of work.

You should note that the Advisory Teacher will not be acting as a home tutor and it is your responsibility to plan your child's education and to carry it out. The LA will not be able to provide any resources although we will be able to offer you some advice on useful materials.

What kind of evidence will be helpful?

A written programme of work will be a starting point for discussion. Samples of work also give a good indication of progress over time, as well as current abilities.

How will I know if the LA is satisfied?

The Advisory Teacher will give you feedback during the visit or after receiving evidence. A written report will be sent to you.

What happens if the LA is not satisfied?

You will be kept fully in the picture if we have concerns and will be advised by letter what issues need to be addressed. You will be given a reasonable time to improve the situation and a further visit / contact will be arranged.

If we are still not satisfied, and there is no evidence of any progress over a period time, the LA may make an Attendance Order (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996), requiring your child to attend a named school. This would be very much a last resort, the LA wants to be as helpful as possible in enabling you to home educate, but has a duty to ensure a suitable education is being provided.

How often will the LA check?

The first visit / contact will be approximately six weeks after we have been notified of your decision. If everything is satisfactory the visits / contact will then take place on a flexible basis, minimum annually.

SECTION 4 BEFORE MAKING YOUR FINAL DECISION

Please;

- think in detail about Education at Home – it requires great commitment and energy
- plan the home education programme thoroughly before withdrawing your child
- provide opportunities for your child to be involved in social activities, contact with other children, and joint activities with other children and groups
- take account of the fact that your child's needs are likely to change at different ages and stages in his/her education
- look at the costs involved – for example, visits, books and resources
- it would not be in your child's best interests to decide to home educate because of a disagreement with a teacher or a school. There are various ways of trying to resolve a problem through the Head teacher, the governors or the LA
- home education should not be seen as a solution to the problem of getting a reluctant child to school. The School Attendance Improvement Officer for your school would be very happy to help you with this problem.

Some parents who decide to home educate find it a happy and constructive experience, but not all of the time. It is a challenge to undertake but Oldham LA will do what they can to assist you in providing a good education. We endeavour to form good relationships with all our home educators.

SECTION 5 CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any queries or comments, or would simply like further advice on any aspect of Education at Home, please contact :

Pupil Service
Level 6
Civic Centre
West Street
Oldham
OL1 1XJ

0161 770 3158

School Attendance Improvement Service
Greenbank
Fir Bank Road
Royton
Oldham
OL2 6TU

0161 770 6620

SECTION 6
USEFUL ADDRESSES AND WEBSITES (Correct as at June 2006)

These organisations support parents who educate their children at home.

Home Education Advisory Service
PO Box 98
Welwyn Garden City
Herts.
AL8 6AN

www.heas.org.uk
01707 371854

Education Otherwise
P.O. Box 325
Kings Lynn
PE34 3XW

www.education-otherwise.org
0870 7300074

Home educators having access to the Internet will find the following sites helpful;
www.parentscentre.gov.uk
www.bbc.co.uk/learning
www.learndirect.co.uk

SECTION 7
PUBLISHERS OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL (Correct as at June 2006)

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building
Shaftesbury Road
Cambridge
CB2 2RU

01233 312393

Letts Educational
Chiswick Centre
414 Chiswick High Road
London
W4 5TF

020 8996 3333

Collins Educational
HarperCollins Publishers
Freepost (GW2446)
Glasgow
G64 1BR

0870 787 1610 (Primary)
1612 (Secondary)

Longman Educational
Schools Division
Marketing Department
Freepost ANG2041
Harlow CM20 2YF

0800 579 579

Folens Publishers Limited
Boscombe Road
Dunstable
Bedfordshire
LU5 4RL

0870 609 1237

Nelson Thornes Ltd
Delta Place
27 Bath Road
Cheltenham
Glos GL53 7TH

01242 267100

Heinemann Educational
Freepost OF1771
PO Box 381
Oxford
OX2 8BR

01865 888066