



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you



Elective Home Education

Information & guidance
for parents & carers

Brighter Futures for Children is the
Directorate of Children's Services at
Reading Borough Council

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Introduction

This booklet aims to help you understand what may be involved if you choose to home educate. It explains some of the situations which may arise, the responsibilities of parents and carers and the role of Brighter Futures for Children.

Is Home Education legal?

Yes. Home Education is legal in all parts of the UK. You do not need to be a teacher or have any other special qualifications.

Do children have to go to school?

No, but they do need to be educated and some parents decide to take on the “duty to educate” their children themselves.

Who is the parent?

The parent is anyone who has parental responsibility (including guardians and carers) and anyone who has the actual day to day care of the child. Where there is a Care Order, an Education Supervision Order or if the child is a Ward of Court, special rules apply and you should seek further advice from the appropriate professionals.

School or home education?



One of the biggest decisions you will ever make is choosing how your child will be educated. There are different options to consider. Most parents choose local schools and are happy with the education provided. Brighter Futures for Children has a range of primary and secondary schools and you can find out more about them by contacting the School Admissions Team on 0118 937 3777. Every school provides its own information and you can telephone them directly to find out more. When parents choose to home educate their child Brighter Futures for Children recognises their right to do so and it seeks to foster positive relationships built on mutual respect so that the educational interests of the child are safeguarded.

What things should I consider when deciding whether or not to educate at home?

- Home educating is a great responsibility and will take a considerable commitment of time and energy
- Is it the best option for your child? Talk to him/her about it
- Contact educational organisations that deal with home education matters. They can help to put you in touch with other parents who are home educating so that you can talk to them about the advantages and disadvantages

- Look at the costs involved – e.g. costs of visits, equipment, books, IT, exams etc.;
- Think about how you could provide opportunities for your child to be involved in social activities, contact with other children and joint activities with other children and groups
- Keep your options open as your child's needs may change at different ages and stages
- Plan for a varied programme of activities and study both in the short and long term. Don't take your child out of school because you have a disagreement with the school or a teacher. If this happens, go to see the Headteacher or contact the Attendance Support Team to see if you can solve the problem
- If your child is currently at school, you can get advice about EHE from the Headteacher, the school's Attendance Support Worker or you can contact Brighter Futures for Children's Advisory Teacher for Elective Home Education.
- The Council has an obligation to educate children who cannot attend school for health reasons, due to exclusion or otherwise. If you are considering withdrawal from school due to medical reasons, the school must offer to hold a meeting with you and the Local Authority to ensure you understand the medical tuition policy and procedures within Brighter Futures for Children. The current Brighter Futures for Children Medical Tuition policy can be found at:

[Supporting children with medical needs policy | BFFC \(brighterfuturesforchildren.org\)](#)

- You must not allow your child to undertake any type of work, paid or otherwise during normal school hours. No child is allowed in law to work below the age of 13 years and all employment must comply with current legislation. You can apply to Reading Borough Council (Attendance Support Team) for a work permit where conditions have been met. Information is available via the link below

<https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/for-parents-carers/children-in-employment/>

If I home educate, will I receive any financial or educational support?

No. If you choose to home educate, Brighter Futures for Children will not provide any financial support, schemes of work or programmes of study. Costs for books, equipment, examination fees, outings, tutors etc. will have to be provided by you. The Advisory Teacher for Elective Home Education can offer appropriate advice and support when asked although it is not their role to provide the actual education. In addition, if your child has been withdrawn from a school, the school is under no obligation to give you any help or assistance. If your child is currently supported by Educational Psychology Service or any specialist therapy services funded by the school, these are also likely to cease.

Can I still access support for my family or child(ren) from other services?

Yes. If you feel your child or family need additional support from Children's Social Care or one of the Children's Action Team professionals, you can self-refer via the online referral form or contact us by phone on the below contacts:



www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org/concerned-about-a-child



Children's Single Point of Access Team 0118 937 3641

Your **general health support** is unaffected by your decision to EHE. In order to ensure that EHE families receive notification from the School Nursing Team regarding immunisations and medical information normally disseminated through schools, contact details will be shared on a confidential basis. If parents/carers wish to opt out of this, they can do so by informing the Advisory Teacher for EHE at Brighter Futures for Children. If you have any concerns or queries about immunisations, you can call the School Immunisation Team on 0300 365 0077 or email them at ssimms@berkshire.nhs.uk.

You should also inform your GP / Health Centre that your child/ren is/are now home educated. You may also be able to access support from a community group or the voluntary sector.

If you have any concerns about the **mental health** of your child/ren, please access support through your GP service, or online through resources such as:

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

About Young Minds:

“Whether they need a reassuring conversation, specialist mental health support, or simply the knowledge that they are not alone in how they are feeling, we will make sure that all young people get support that meets them where they're at as quickly as possible.”

[No5 - Free Counselling Services - Reading](#)

About No 5:

“No 5 is a community- based organisation offering counselling and support to young people and those around them. Our counselling sessions are provided by fully trained volunteer counsellors. We have 65 counsellors offering sessions five days a week. Our volunteers come from all walks of life and backgrounds, but all share a commitment to supporting young people.”

[Home - Kooth](#)

About Kooth:

“Kooth PLC is a digital mental health and wellbeing company working to provide a welcoming space for digital mental health care, available to all.”

What is the parent's duty?

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states 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.”



What is compulsory school age?

This means from the beginning of the school term after his or her fifth birthday, until the last Friday in June where the child is 16, or between 1st September of the previous year and 31st August of the current year.

What happens when my child reaches the end of compulsory schooling?

In the July following a young person's 16th birthday, they cease to be statutory school age, however, they are still required by law to be in education, training or employment. Elevate Careers are the service within Brighter Futures for Children responsible for supporting and tracking all known post-16 students. Details of all post 16 students on the EHE register will automatically be transferred to them before their names are removed from the EHE register.

What is 'full time' education?

Although the length of full time is not specified, children in school normally spend between 22 and 25 hours on work each week, (38 weeks per year) which may be a helpful guideline. However, there is no requirement for parents to do the same.

Do I have to teach the National Curriculum?

No. It does not apply to children educated at home. However, it is a comprehensive package of subjects with detailed content and expectations for all ages that could be a useful tool for home education. You may wish your child to re-enter school at some point in the future and this would be easier for them if the requirements of the National Curriculum have been taken into account.

Do I have to deliver any specific curriculum areas?

No, although it is generally accepted that literacy and numeracy will form part of any home education. Children learn in many different ways, at different times and speeds and from different people. Education does not always need to follow a set plan of 'lessons' or even a 'timetable'. It can be varied and flexible as long as you can show that the education is suitable, efficient and full time.



If I withdraw my child/ren to home educate, will my child/ren be able to return to school in the future?

Yes, if you contact the School Admissions Team on 0118 937 3777, they will be able to give you advice and support to enable your child to return to school.

Can my child still take exams?

Yes. You can arrange for children to take exams as external/private candidates at various exam centres. Other home educators in your area may be able to signpost you to centres they have used successfully. You will need to contact the centres to make enquiries about the subjects they offer and any exam timetables they have. As there are no grants or other funds available to cover the costs, if you decide to enter your child for any examinations, you will be responsible for contacting the examination boards, booking the exams and paying any fees incurred.

Will I have to arrange for my Year 6 child to take the Statutory Assessment Tests?

Statutory Assessment Tests in Year 6 are only a requirement at state schools and therefore not relevant to home education. Your child will not be required to sit the tests.

Can I educate a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan at home?

Yes. There is no law prohibiting the home education of these children. Additional permission is required if they are attending a special school. It is Brighter Futures for Children Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) team's responsibility to conduct an Annual Review. If the child has an Education, Health and Care Plan and is being home educated, it is the responsibility of the parent to demonstrate to Brighter Futures for Children SEND team at the Annual Review that the requirements within the document are being met for as long as the Education, Health and Care Plan is maintained.

Furthermore, when home educating, you may still apply for your child to be receive an Education, Health and Care Plan. Brighter Futures for Children will process the request through the normal procedures. Support and guidance is available through Reading Information and Advice Service for SEND (IASS) (contact 0118 937 3421).

What if my child is on roll at a special school?

If your child attends a special school, you will need permission from Brighter Futures for Children's SEND team to de-register him / her and you will need to show that you can provide for his/her special needs as detailed in the Education, Health and Care Plan. Permission cannot be unreasonably withheld.

I've decided to home educate so how do I start?

If your child has never been to school, there is no action for you to take prior to starting home education, although it is helpful to let your local School Admissions Team (contact number 0118 937 3777) know that you have decided to home educate in preference to requesting a school place. If your child is in school, you must formally de-register him/her by writing to the Headteacher and saying that you intend to “withdraw your child to electively home educate him / her”.

What happens when I withdraw my child from school?

You are immediately responsible for the education of your child. Once you have informed the school that you are home educating, the school will inform Brighter Futures for Children and send them a completed a School Exit Form. The Advisory Teacher for EHE will send you an EHE pack and then contact you to talk about the work you are planning to undertake and your longer-term educational plans for the child. You may wish to meet face-to-face or prefer to provide information over the telephone, by email or in writing. All these ways are acceptable.

What is the role of Brighter Futures for Children?

Brighter Futures for Children recognises every parent's right to choose to home educate and accepts that every family may opt for different content and approach to delivery. The Advisory Teacher for EHE will endeavour to look at each child's individual programme to see if the education is suitable. If a child is not attending school full-time, the law does not assume that the child is not being suitably educated. It does, however, require the LA, in this case, Brighter Futures for Children to enquire what education is being provided. Brighter Futures for Children has this responsibility for all children of compulsory school age who reside within Reading borough. Depending on the result of these enquiries, further action may be required, within the constraints of the law.

What is an “efficient” and “suitable” education?

Case law defines education as ‘efficient’ if it achieves what it sets out to achieve and ‘suitable’ if it “primarily equips a child for life within the community of which s/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 s/he wishes to do so”.

What might a “suitable” education look like?

AEHEP suggests that parents/carers who are electively home educating their children are well advised to provide the Local Authority with evidence of the education delivered that will demonstrate its suitability. What constitutes a 'suitable' education should be considered on a

case-by-case basis according to age, ability, aptitude and any SEND a child may have. This may lead to varying reasons why home education arrangements are seen as suitable or not suitable. The following guidance is to help parents/carers and professionals determine if education is suitable or not suitable. Education should have relevance to the child's own experience, to adult life and include practical aspects. A starting point for suitable EHE provision may include the following characteristics:

- the introduction of a broad range of knowledge, understanding and skills, including literacy and numeracy.
- the education should be balanced and demonstrate that each part of the provision is allotted sufficient time to allow for a broad range of subject matter. Children should understand the relevance of what they are learning and how they can usefully apply the learning to life.
- the education and how it is presented and delivered needs to be matched to the child's age, abilities and aptitude, taking into account any SEND.
- it is important that siblings of different ages receive an education differentiated to their individual needs.

Other aspects of a rounded education, such as personal, social and health education, outdoor and environmental education, citizenship, careers, technology and ICT could be incorporated into the learning experience.

What might make an education “not suitable”?

Reasons why the EHE provision might be considered not suitable may include:

- Parents/Carers share none or extremely limited information and/or only share resources which they may have simply copied from online sites.
- the education provision described lacks sufficient detail and it is difficult to ascertain what education is being ‘received’ by the child.
- Parents/Carers choose to only share a report of the work that is being covered by their child, without demonstrating how the provision referred to within the report is being ‘received’ by the child.
- there is no or very limited information regarding resources used internally and externally.
- there is no or very limited detail of how the child is progressing, or information to demonstrate relevant progress

Ultimately, a judgement has to be made in each individual circumstance. You can get further advice on this by contacting Brighter Futures for Children's Advisory Teacher for Elective Home Education – 0118 937 3840 / 07779 433763 You can also get information from other organisations that offer support and advice on elective home education.

How can I show that the education being provided is suitable?

Brighter Futures for Children will ask you to provide evidence that your child/ren is/are receiving a suitable education. This can be done in several ways, for example you might:

- Accept a home visit from the Advisory Teacher for EHE to share plans and work
- Write a report, including evidence of progress
- Provide samples of work which may be written, pictorial, photographic etc.
- Meet the Advisory Teacher for EHE elsewhere, for example in a local library to share plans and work

- Have the education provision endorsed by a recognised third party, for example a recognised online school or supported educational package
- Provide evidence in any other appropriate form.

It is always preferable to have the child/ren present to share their work but in particular circumstances, Brighter Futures for Children accept that this may not be possible. After any agreed contact, the Advisory Teacher for EHE will discuss whether the education provided is suitable or not, discuss any concerns and may offer some suggestions for further progress.

How often will Brighter Futures for Children contact parents?

Brighter Futures for Children accepts that all contact with EHE families is on a voluntary basis, unless there are legal reasons why contact is required, for example if the child/ren the subject of a Child Protection Plan. Following any contact, providing the Advisory Teacher for EHE is satisfied that the education provided is suitable, then a mutually convenient follow-up date will be arranged, usually between 3 and 6 months later. After that, any contact will normally be on an annual basis. Parents can request additional advice / contact at any time.

What if Brighter Futures for Children is not satisfied?

The vast majority of parents home educate their children successfully and often to a very high standard. However, occasionally following a report from the Advisory Teacher for EHE, Brighter Futures for Children may not be satisfied with the provision of education a child is receiving. In such cases, the parent will be informed in writing of the concerns and a timescale given for changes to be made before further contact is arranged. If Brighter Futures for Children is still not satisfied it may issue a notice requiring the parent to satisfy them that the child is receiving suitable education. If a parent fails to satisfy Brighter Futures for Children within the specified time stated in the notice, we may issue an order known as a School Attendance Order requiring the child to become a pupil at a named school. Failure to comply would be an offence. This is a very rare occurrence and Brighter Futures for Children would hope to work with parents so that this route is avoided.

However, it must be borne in mind that Brighter Futures for Children has a legal responsibility to act to safeguard and promote the educational well-being of the child.

Can I still home educate my child/ren if we move house?

Yes. Whether you move within Reading Borough or to another borough you need to inform Brighter Futures for Children of your new address including the postcode and the date of your move. If you move within the borough your address will be updated on the EHE database. If you move outside the borough, Brighter Futures for Children will inform the receiving borough that you are currently registered as home educating your child/ren. The EHE officer in your new borough will contact you to offer continued support.

It is important that you notify Brighter Futures for Children of any change of address so that posted information, which may contain personal details, is sent to the correct address, and not opened by anyone other than yourself.

In summary

Brighter Futures for Children's Advisory Teacher for EHE can offer advice to parents who are thinking about withdrawing their child / children to home educate to enable them to make a fully informed decision.

Once Brighter Futures for Children becomes aware that a parent has decided to electively home-educate:

- The child will be placed on the EHE register
- The Advisory Teacher for EHE will contact the parent in writing and send an Elective Home Education pack to them
- The Advisory Teacher will try to make contact to offer support in any form that is acceptable to the family
- The Advisory Teacher for EHE will consider any evidence you choose to present including any plans you may have.
- If the Advisory Teacher for EHE is satisfied that you are providing or have clear plans to provide a suitable education for your child, s/he will tell you and a mutually convenient follow-up date will be made, usually between 3 and 6 months later. After this, contact will normally be on an annual basis. Parents may request additional meetings if they wish.
- If the Advisory Teacher for EHE considers that you are not providing, or cannot provide a suitable education, s/he will tell you and arrange to contact you more frequently. In the rare cases where this happens, a report will give the reasons for this decision and will outline what will happen next.
- Where the educational provision is considered to be unsuitable, parents will be given time to adjust their plans. If the education continues to be unsuitable then Brighter Futures for Children may follow the legal process resulting in the serving of a School Attendance Order requiring the child to attend a named school. Failure to comply is an offence and Brighter Futures for Children would then seek legal advice.

If, as a result of any contact the Advisory Teacher for EHE has major educational, health, welfare or social concerns about your child, they may, in the interest of the child, refer them to the appropriate Education department / Children's Social Care.

If I want to make a complaint, what should I do?

Brighter Futures for Children would hope to resolve any problems with you but if you still wish to make a complaint, there is a complaints procedure. To find out more, please contact the Education, Access and Support Service Manager on 0118 937 4336

Further Information

General

This Guidance is made by Brighter Futures for Children pursuant to

- The Education Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- Department for Education, Children Missing Education – Statutory guidance for local authorities. September 2016.
- Department for Education, Elective Home Education. Departmental guidelines for Local Authorities. April 2019

- Department for Education, Elective Home Education. Departmental guidelines for parents. April 2019
- Department for Education, working together to improve school attendance – Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities. May 2022.
- A E H E P (Association of Elective Home Education Professionals) Suitable Education - Guidelines for Parent/Carers and Professionals. October 2022

Definitions

Case Law

- R v Secretary of State For Education & Science, Ex Parte Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadass School Trust - Times, April 12 1985
- Phillips v Brown 1980

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