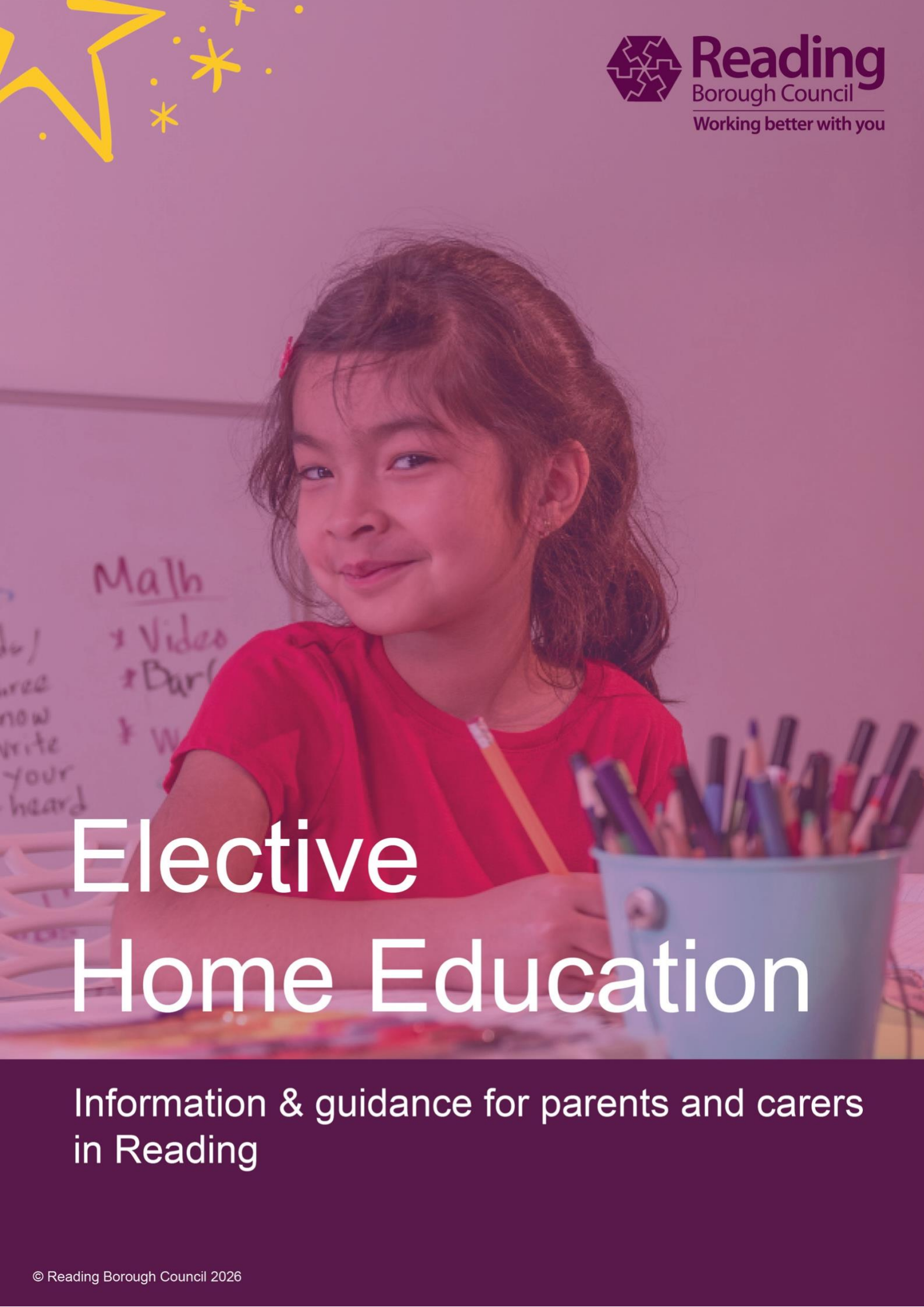




Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you



Elective Home Education

Information & guidance for parents and carers
in Reading



Elective Home Education

Information and Guidance for Parents and Carers

Owner

Education Access and Support Service

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Introduction

This booklet is designed to support you if you are considering or have chosen to educate your child at home. It provides information about what elective home education may involve, explains some of the situations you may encounter, and outlines the responsibilities of parents and carers. It also explains the role of the local authority in offering advice, guidance, and support along the way.

Is elective home education legal?

Elective home education is a legal option throughout the UK. You do not need to be a qualified teacher or have any special qualifications to educate your child at home. Many parents and carers from a wide range of backgrounds successfully home educate, building learning around their child's individual needs, interests, and strengths.

The local authority has a duty to ensure that all children that are electively home educated are receiving a suitable education. This would include those children that are being flexi-schooled. Parents/carers will be required to evidence their child's home education. Further detail on this is provided within this guidance.

Do children have to go to school?

No, but they do need to be receiving a suitable education. Some parents decide to take on the 'duty to educate' their children themselves through the route of elective home education.

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.

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 that is suitable:

- a. to their age, ability and aptitude, and*
- b. to any special educational needs they may have,*

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.'

Deciding between sending your child to school or home educating them

Choosing how your child will be educated is an important decision, and there are different options to consider. Many families choose a local school, while others decide that home education is the right approach for their child.



If you would like information about schools in Reading, please refer to <https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/for-parents-carers/schools/>. Alternatively you can contact the School Admissions Team on 0118 937 3777 or email schooladmissions@reading.gov.uk. Schools can also provide information about their individual offer and answer any questions you may have.

The local authority recognises the right of parents to choose elective home education and is committed to working positively with families, offering information, guidance and support to help children thrive to ensure every child received a suitable education.

Flexi-schooling

Flexi-schooling is a lawful educational arrangement in England. This is when a child is registered at school but attends for only part of the week. For the remainder of the time, parents take responsibility for providing their child's education at home or elsewhere. This means the days your child/ren aren't in school they would be seen as being elective home educated.

Flexi-schooling is a lawful educational arrangement in England. However, parents/carers do not have an automatic right to flexi-schooling. The arrangement can only happen if the school's headteacher agrees. Schools are under no obligation to offer flexi-schooling arrangements. Each request is considered individually. If the school agrees, a written agreement is often used to set out expectations and responsibilities for both the school and parents/carers. A child who is flexi-schooled remains on the school's register as a full-time pupil. The school records attendance in line with the agreed arrangement

When a flexi-schooling arrangement is in place:

- The school is responsible for the education provided during school attendance.
- Parents/carers are responsible for the education provided outside school. Parents/carers will be responsible for any costs associated with the education they provide outside of school.
- The overall education must still amount to an efficient full-time education, that is suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs.

What things should I consider when deciding whether to home educate?

Choosing to home educate your child is an important decision. For many families it can be a positive and rewarding experience, but it also requires a considerable commitment of time, energy, planning and resources. Before making your decision, it is important to gather information, explore all available options and think carefully about what home education will mean for your child and your family. Things to consider:

- Is home education the best option for your child? Talk to your child about home education and consider their views, feelings and aspirations. Think carefully about whether home education will help them thrive both academically and personally.



- Consider speaking to organisations and groups that support home educating families. They may be able to put you in touch with experienced home educating parents who can share both the benefits and challenges of home education.
- If your child is currently attending school, consider discussing any concerns with the school before making a decision. If your decision is linked to difficulties at school, a disagreement with a teacher, or attendance concerns, it may be helpful to speak with the headteacher or seek advice to explore whether the issues can be resolved.
- If you are considering withdrawing your child from school for medical reasons, the school should offer a meeting with you and the local authority so that you can understand the support available and the Medical Tuition Policy. Further information can be found in the <https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/supporting-children-with-medical-needs-policy/>.
- Parents are responsible for funding home education, including learning resources and activities. Costs may include books, educational materials, equipment, IT, educational visits/ activities, club, examination fees such as GCSE's and other qualifications
- Think about how your child will meet and interact with other children and young people. Consider opportunities such as home education groups, clubs, community activities
- Children's needs and interests can change over time, so it is important to remain flexible and consider both short-term and long-term plans.
- Children must not undertake any paid or unpaid work during normal school hours. By law, children under the age of 13 cannot be employed, and any employment must comply with child employment legislation. Further information regarding children in employment is available via this link: <https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/for-parents-carers/children-in-employment/>
- Plan for a varied programme of activities and study both in the short and long term.
- Have you thought about how your child will learn and develop their skills knowledge and interest?
- Do you have access to suitable learning resources, activities and opportunities to ensure your child will thrive being home educated?
- Have you considered how home education may affect your family's routine, work commitments and finances?
- Have you considered your child's future plans, including further education, training or employment?

What is compulsory school age?

Compulsory school age is the age at which a child must be receiving a suitable full-time education. A child becomes compulsory school age from the beginning of the school term after their fifth birthday. In England, this begins on the 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following a child's fifth birthday (whichever comes first).



children must receive a suitable education, either at school or through elective home education.

It may also be helpful to note that while compulsory schooling ends at age 16 on the last day in June, young people in England must continue in education, employment with training, or an apprenticeship until age 18.

What is 'full time' education?

As a guide, children attending school are typically in school for around 32.5 hours each week during term time for 39 weeks per year. Full-time education does not mean recreating school at home or teaching for a set number of hours each day. Home education can be flexible and tailored to the individual child. Learning may take place through a range of activities, including projects, reading, educational visits, practical experiences, community activities, online learning, and everyday life. What is important is that the education provided is suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs, and supports their overall development.

Do I have to teach the National Curriculum?

You are not required to follow the National Curriculum when home educating your child. However, many families find it a useful reference, as it sets out the subjects and skills typically taught in schools at different ages and stages. If there is a possibility that your child may return to school in the future, using the National Curriculum as a guide may help to support a smoother transition.

Do I have to teach any specific subjects or curriculum areas?

While there are no specific subjects that you must teach, the local authority encourage families to include the core subjects of English, maths and science as part of their child's education, as these skills can support learning across a wide range of areas and help prepare children for future opportunities.

What is an "efficient" and "suitable" education?

The law (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996) requires parents to ensure that their child receives an **efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have**, whether at school or otherwise.

Case law has helped to clarify what this means:

- An **efficient** education is one that achieves what it is intended to achieve.
- A **suitable** education was described as 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, so long as it does not foreclose the child's options in later years to adopt some other form of life if she/he wishes to do so."



In practical terms, this means that home education should:

- Help your child learn and make progress.
- Reflect your child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs.
- Prepare your child for adult life and future opportunities.
- Allow your child to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Be tailored to your child's individual needs and circumstances.

Home education does not need to look like school, follow the National Curriculum, or take place at set times. Many families use a wide range of learning opportunities, including reading, projects, educational visits, practical activities, community involvement, sports, online learning and everyday experiences, to provide a suitable education.

What might a “suitable” education look like?

Whether an education is considered ‘suitable’ should be assessed on an individual basis, taking into account the child’s age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs or disabilities. As every child’s circumstances are different, the reasons why home education arrangements may be considered suitable or unsuitable will vary from case to case.

When considering whether the education being provided is suitable, the local authority may expect the provision to demonstrate the following characteristics:

- **Broad** – introducing the child to a wide range of knowledge, skills and experiences, including the development of literacy and numeracy.
- **Balanced** – ensuring that sufficient time is given to different areas of learning, without one area dominating at the expense of others.
- **Relevant** – helping the child to apply their learning to everyday life, future opportunities and the wider world, with appropriate opportunities for practical learning.
- **Personalised** – reflecting the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), with learning tailored to their individual circumstances.

A well-rounded education may also include opportunities to develop personal, social and emotional skills, physical and mental wellbeing, citizenship, environmental awareness, digital skills, career exploration, and preparation for adult life.

There is no single approach to home education, and families may choose methods that best suit their child’s needs, interests and learning style. Many home education programmes combine a range of approaches, which may include:

- Following a structured curriculum
- Studying individual subjects in depth
- Project-based learning



- Child-led learning, where learning is guided by the child's interests and curiosity
- Play-based learning
- Educational visits and trips
- Outdoor and nature-based learning.

The most effective approach will vary from child to child. What is important is that the education provided enables the child to make progress and supports their individual learning needs and aspirations.

What might make an education “not suitable”?

The suitability of home education should always be considered in the context of the individual child. What is suitable will vary from child to child, and each case should be considered on its own merits.

However, concerns about suitability may arise where:

- Parents/carers provide little or no information about the educational provision or share resources without explaining how they are being used to support the child's learning
- The information provided lacks sufficient detail to understand the education being received by the child and how it meets their individual needs
- Parents/carers provide a summary of topics, activities, or resources being used, but do not demonstrate how the child engages with, benefits from, or progresses through these learning opportunities
- There is limited information about the resources, experiences, or learning opportunities available to the child
- There is limited information available to demonstrate the child's progress, development, or acquisition of knowledge and skills over time
- The information provided does not clearly show how the educational provision is suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs or disabilities
- The child is not making progress over time in line with their individual circumstances and starting point
- The provision does not support the development of key skills, such as literacy and numeracy, where appropriate for the child
- The education is excessively narrow and does not provide sufficient opportunities for learning and development
- The learning environment makes it difficult for the child to engage effectively in education.
- The education does not adequately prepare the child for adult life, independence, and participation in wider society.



The local authority may require further information where the educational provision is not clearly described, where it is unclear how learning opportunities are being accessed by the child, or where there is insufficient information to understand how the provision supports the child's progress and development. This may include situations where limited information is provided about learning activities, educational resources, or the child's engagement and progress over time. Your elective home education officer will discuss this further with you, if there are any concerns regarding suitability of your child/ren's elective home education. Your elective home education officer can be contacted by email eh@reading.gov.uk or call on 0118 937 2667.

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

The local authority will make enquiries about a child/ren's elective home education and may request information or evidence periodically, including annually, to satisfy itself that the child is receiving a suitable education under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996.

As a guidance parent/carers will receive a request for evidence of suitable education during the following time periods:

- Key Stage 4 (Year 10,11) – After October half term
- Key Stage 3 (Year 7,8,9) -After Christmas
- Key Stage 2 (Year 6,5,4,3) – After Easter
- Key Stage 1 (Reception, Year 1, 2) – After May half term.

If you have multiple children and would prefer to provide evidence of home education at the same time this will be accepted. The timescale above is a guidance and if parents/carers have any questions regarding this please don't hesitate in contacting your elective home education officer.

There are a few options for providing evidence of your child's elective home education:

- A home visit to share evidence of learning
- Arranging a visit to the Civic Centre/libraries to share evidence of learning
- Complete the report provided by your elective home education officer, providing any supporting evidence.

Parents/carers may show evidence of their child/ren's elective home education by:

- Sharing examples of learning, such as written work, projects, artwork, photographs, learning journals, or other activities your child has enjoyed
- Tell us about educational visits, clubs, sports, volunteering, hobbies, and life skills that form part of your child's learning journey
- Provide certificates, tutor feedback, online learning records, or other evidence of achievements where available



There is no expectation that you provide every type of evidence listed above. A small selection of information is often enough to help us understand how your child is being educated. We value the time and commitment families invest in home education and appreciate your willingness to share your child's learning journey with us. Our role is to understand the education being provided and to offer support where needed, while recognising and respecting the individuality of every home educating family.

After any agreed contact, the elective home education officer will discuss whether the education provided is suitable or not, discuss any concerns and may offer some suggestions for further progress.

What is the role of the local authority?

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 local authority to make enquires about what education is being provided. The local authority has this responsibility for all children of compulsory school age who reside within Reading. If it is deemed that a child/ren is not receiving a suitable education, following enquiries made then further action may be required within the constraints of the law.

The local authority recognise that parents/carer's have the right to choose elective home education for their children and aim to develop positive relationships with families based on mutual respect and cooperation, listening to your approach to learning, celebrate your child/ren's achievements and provide support where needed, while respecting your right to educate your child/ren in a way that works best for your family. The local authority's role is not to approve or direct how parents educate, but to help ensure that children of compulsory school age are receiving a suitable education and to offer advice and support where appropriate. The elective home education officer will occasionally contact you to learn more about the education you are providing. This helps us understand how your child is learning and ensures that children of compulsory school age are receiving a suitable education.

How often will the local authority contact parents?

The elective home education officer will make initial contact with your family to learn about your child/ren's education and offer any support or guidance that may be helpful. A follow-up discussion, meeting, or home visit may then be arranged by mutual agreement.

If the education being provided appears suitable and there are no concerns, future contact will normally take place on a yearly/annual basis, as per the timescales for evidence of home education being requested. Parents and carers are welcome to contact the elective home education officer at any time for advice, information, or additional support.

Where a child is supported through a child in need plan or child protection plan, the elective home education officer will maintain more regular contact with the family. This



may include telephone calls and home visits, alongside ongoing communication with other professionals involved with the family. The purpose of this enhanced involvement is to ensure that the child is receiving a suitable full-time education and to offer support, advice, and guidance where needed. The elective home education officer will also attend relevant meetings as the education representative and provide updates regarding the child's home education.

In some circumstances, families whose children are not subject to a child in need or child protection plan may also be offered more frequent contact and support. This may be appropriate where additional guidance is requested, where changes in educational provision are taking place, or where the family would benefit from extra assistance.

Our aim is to work positively with families, providing support that helps children and young people thrive in their home education journey.

What if the local authority is not satisfied with my child's home education?

Most parents provide a suitable and enriching home education for their children. However, there may occasionally be situations where the local authority is concerned that there is insufficient information available to demonstrate that a child is receiving a suitable education.

Where concerns arise, we will always seek to work collaboratively with parents and carers. We will explain our concerns and provide guidance on any additional information or changes that may be needed, along with a reasonable timescale for this to be addressed. A follow-up discussion, meeting, or review of further evidence will then be arranged.

If the local authority remains unable to be satisfied that a suitable education is being provided, the law requires us to make further enquiries. Under Section 437 of the Education Act 1996, the local authority may issue a formal notice asking parents to satisfy them that their child is receiving a suitable education. If sufficient evidence is not provided within the timescale set out in the notice, the local authority may begin the process of issuing a school attendance order, naming a school that the child would be required to attend. Failure to comply with a school attendance order is an offence.

This is a very rare outcome, and our priority is always to work alongside families to help avoid the need for formal action. At the heart of our role is a legal responsibility to promote and safeguard the educational wellbeing of children, while maintaining positive and respectful relationships with home educating families.

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

If you choose to home educate, you will take responsibility for organising and funding your child's education. This includes any costs associated with learning resources, books, equipment, educational visits, tutors, and examination fees.



The elective home education officer can offer advice, guidance, and signposting to sources of information and support. However, responsibility for planning and delivering your child's education remains with you as the parent or carer.

If your child has been withdrawn from school, the school is not required to continue providing educational support or resources. In addition, access to services that are provided through the school, may end when your child leaves the school roll. Families should consider this carefully when deciding whether home education is the right option for them.

I've decided to home educate my child - how do I start?

If your child has never attended school, please contact the school admissions team on **0118 937 3777** or email schooladmissions@reading.gov.uk that you intend to home educate your child/ren. Although there is no legal requirement to put this in writing, we would encourage families to confirm in writing their plans to educate your child/ren, this can be provided by email. The school admissions team will then notify the elective home education team and we will proceed in registering your child/ren as home educated.

If your child/ren is currently attending school, prior to parents/carers making the final decision to home educate we would encourage meetings to take place with school which the elective home education officer can attend to discuss any concerns and the expectations of home education. If you do decide to proceed with elective home education, then you must formally de-register them by providing written notification to the headteacher that you intend to withdraw your child/ren from school to home educate them. Once the school receives your written notification the elective home education team will be notified and the school will start the process to remove your child/ren from school roll.

This is an important decision, and we encourage families to seek advice and consider all available options before making the transition to home education.

What happens when I withdraw my child from school?

Once you have informed the school that you have chosen to home educate, responsibility for your child's education transfers to you as the parent or carer. The school will notify the local authority and provide the relevant information about your child's removal from the school roll.

An elective home education officer will then send you an information pack and make contact during the early stages of your home education journey. This provides an opportunity to discuss your educational approach, any plans you have for your child's learning, and any advice or support that may be helpful as you get started. We recognise that every family takes a different approach to home education and aim to work alongside families.



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

If you feel your child or family need additional support from children's social care or any other agencies, you can self-refer via the Children's Single Point of Access team (CSPoA) on 0118 937 3641 or contact the elective home education officer to discuss your support needs, so the relevant referrals can be made.

Choosing to home educate does not affect your child's access to general health services. To help ensure that home educating families continue to receive important information from the school nursing team, including details about immunisations and other health-related updates that are usually shared through schools, your contact details will be shared confidentially with the team. If you would prefer not to have your contact details shared, you can opt out at any time by informing the elective home education officer at the local authority. If you have any concerns or queries about immunisations, you can call the school immunisation team on 0300 365 0077 or email them at westschoolimms@berkshire.nhs.uk

We recommend letting your GP practice know that your child is no longer attending school. This can help ensure that you continue to receive any relevant health information, advice and support available to children and young people. 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."

You may also be able to access support from a community group or the voluntary sector.

<https://www.tellmi.help/what-is-tellmi>

About Tellmi:

Tellme is an NHS funded service that offers free, safe and anonymous peer and counsellor support to young people aged 11+.



Tellmi is a safe, anonymous app where you can talk about absolutely anything. From anxiety to autism, depression to divorce, or self-harm to self-esteem, sharing your experiences with our awesome community helps you to feel better. Our moderators check everything to keep you safe and our in-house counsellors are always on hand if you need extra support.

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

If you decide that school is the right option for your child in the future, they can return to school at any point during the school year. An in-year application form will need to be completed. The school admissions team can provide advice and support to help with the process. You can contact them on 0118 937 3777 or by email at schooladmissions@reading.gov.uk.

Can my child still take exams?

Home educated children can take qualifications such as GCSEs as private (external) candidates at approved examination centres. Other home educating families may be able to recommend centres they have used and share their experiences.

You will need to contact examination centres directly to find out which subjects they offer, their entry requirements and examination timetables. Please also consider choosing the right exam board for each subject. Also please be aware that there is currently no government funding available to cover examination costs for home educated students. If you choose to enter your child for exams, you will be responsible for arranging entries, booking examinations and paying any associated fees. It is often a good idea to start researching examination options well in advance, as some centres have limited places and entry deadlines may be several months before the examination date.

Find an exam centre local to you, by typing in your postcode via JCQ's private candidate search tool. [Private Candidates - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

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

Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) in Year 6 are only required for pupils attending state schools. Children who are educated at home are not required to take these tests.

My child has/needs an education, health and care plan (EHCP) – can they be home educated?

There is no law that prevents a child with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) from being educated at home. If your child has an EHCP and is home educated, the local authority's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) team is responsible for arranging and carrying out the annual review of the plan.



If your child is currently on a school roll and you are considering elective home education, it is recommended that an early annual review is held before home education begins. This provides an opportunity to discuss how your child's special educational needs will be met and to consider any support required during the transition. Please speak to your school's SEND team regarding the arrangement of an early annual review, if you are considering elective home education.

As long as the EHCP remains in place, parents will need to demonstrate at the annual review how their child's special educational needs are being met and how the provision outlined in the plan is being delivered through their home education arrangements.

If your child currently doesn't have an EHCP and this is something you feel they will benefit from then as a parent/carer you may start the process to try and get a plan in place. For further information regarding this, please contact the Reading Information and Advice Service (IASS) by accessing their website [CONTACT - Reading Information, Advice and Support for SEND](#) or calling on 0118 937 3421.

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

If your child attends a special school, you will need the consent of the local authority's SEND team before they can be removed from the school roll and educated at home. As part of this process, you will need to demonstrate how you will meet your child's special educational needs as set out in their EHCP.

The SEND team will consider the arrangements you propose and whether they are suitable to meet your child's needs. Consent to de-register a child from a special school for home education cannot be unreasonably withheld.

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

Yes. If you move home, whether within Reading or to another local authority area, please let the local authority know your new address, including the postcode and the date of your move.

If you move within Reading, we will update your details on our records. If you move outside the borough, please provide your full new address, the date of your move, and confirmation of whether you intend to continue home educating your child(ren).

Once we have received this information, the elective home education officer will notify the relevant local authority of your move. Your child(ren) will then no longer be recorded as home educated in Reading, and the elective home education team in your new area will contact you to offer ongoing support and advice.

It is important to tell us about any change of address as soon as possible. This helps ensure that any correspondence containing personal or confidential information is sent to the correct address and received only by you.



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

The last day in June, 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 are the service within the local authority responsible for supporting and tracking all known post-16 students. Details of all post-16 students on the elective home education register will automatically be transferred to the Elevate Service once they are no longer statutory school age.

Privacy Notice

We collect and use personal information about you and your child to fulfil our duties in relation to elective home education. For details about how your information is used, stored and shared, please see our Privacy Notice. [Directorate of Children's Services \(Brighter Futures for Children\): Privacy Notice - Reading Borough Council](#)

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

The local authority 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 Team on 0118 937 2119.

Further information

This guidance is made by the local authority pursuant to:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- Department for Education, Children Missing Education – Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities. September 2025.
- 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. July 2026.
- 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