

# Dorset Elective Home Education (EHE)

## A Guide for Parents and Carers



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## Introduction

You can choose to educate your child at home, that's called Elective Home Education (EHE), or at school. It is important that you know it is your choice and up to you to decide what is a suitable education for your child. Your child's education is always your responsibility. The Local Authority is not here to correct you. They are here to help you, give you support and provide reassurance from a trustworthy person that you can educate your children in the way that you see fit.

For most parents the choice to home educate is a lifestyle choice, requiring significant commitment in terms of time and resources; it is not something which parents generally decide to do without a great deal of research and thought. The decision to home educate can be made for a great many reasons, such as wanting to travel widely, wanting to spend more time together as a family, providing for a child's special interests, a child having special needs, being bullied, or simply being less well suited to a school environment.

The Education Act 1996 says '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'. **In simple terms, education is compulsory, school is not.** Hopefully the Q and A below will help you on your journey to making the right decision for your child. It has been created with home educating parents and sits alongside a Guidance For Dorset Schools document and a Dorset Home Education Policy, both of which can be made available to you.

### 1. What is elective home education?

Every child has to be educated from the age of five to sixteen by law (Compulsory school age is until the last Friday of June in the school year that they turn sixteen), and it is parents' and carers' responsibility to make sure that this happens. Children can be educated in school or can be educated at home – it is for every parent or carer to decide what would be best for their child. You do not have to stick to one choice through the whole of their education, or you may choose that they attend a school the whole time or are home educated the whole time.

Educating at school will mean that your child follows the National Curriculum. How this looks will vary in terms of day to day delivery in each school, but essentially means that certain content is taught at certain stages, and at the end of each stage (known as Key Stage) nationally set tests are used to establish whether age related expectations have been met. Schools aim to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum which prepares children for the next stage in learning and preparation for adulthood. Home education does not have to follow the National Curriculum.

### 2. What does home education look like?

Educating at home can be done in a variety of ways to best meet the needs of your child and does not have to follow a National Curriculum, cover certain topics or meet certain standards by certain stages or ages. Some home educators do follow the national curriculum. There are lots of resources available to support them in this. Or if they prefer they may choose to use tutors for part or all of the teaching (see below for further information on using tutors). Some home

educators follow a child-led approach, building on the interests, skills and passions and aspirations of the child as they develop. Speaking to other home educators about the approaches that they have taken may help you in your decision-making.

Home educating does not have to be delivered at the same times and days as school education. You do not have to have a scheduled timetable or stick to 'term times' to educate your child. The law requires parents to secure appropriate full-time education, so home education should occupy a significant proportion of a child's life but can be delivered in a flexible way.

Home education does not have to be delivered 'in the home'. It may be that it includes education outside, on visits or in many other ways that are right for your child.

Schools are inspected by Ofsted and are registered with the Department for Education (DfE). Ofsted uses a framework of criteria against which they judge the school's education and safeguarding standards. Home educators are not registered with the DfE and are not inspected by Ofsted.

### 3. Do I need to be a qualified teacher to home educate?

You do not need to be a teacher or have any other special qualifications.

### 4. What if I want to use a tutor?

If using a tutor, the tutor must be suitably qualified and DBS checked. There are lots of companies that can arrange a tutor for you. Other home educators in the area may be happy to recommend tutors. However, in all cases it is your responsibility to check that you are happy with the quality of the education that they are delivering.

You also need to be careful about how many children the tutor is teaching at one time. If the tutor is teaching five or more children at the same time full time (or one child who is looked after or has an EHC Plan), they are required to register as a school, must operate from a building and must offer a curriculum that includes English and maths. Full time education is deemed by the DfE to be 18 hours or more a week. If not meeting these requirements this is an unregistered school and is illegal.

### 5. What do you need to consider when thinking about home education?

Taking responsibility for your child's education is a big responsibility and will take a lot of time and energy. Costs of educating your child become your responsibility too (not that it has to be expensive, but you need to be aware that books, materials, exam fees, trips and other resources will be paid for by you). You will also want to think about how you will help to maintain good social networks for your child, as this will also be part of your responsibility.

## 6. Questions to discuss when considering EHE

- Are you considering EHE as a positive choice or do you feel you have no alternative? If the latter, we would strongly advise that you discuss this with an Inclusion Lead from Dorset Council before taking further steps to remove your child from school.
- Have you discussed home education with your child? What are their views?
- What experience can you use to help you to successfully home educate?
- Do you have the time to devote to your child's education?
- Are you able to provide the necessary resources to support your child's education?
- How will you ensure that your child has opportunities to have social experiences?
- How will you ensure that your child has opportunities to take part in physical exercise?
- Do you want your child to take GCSEs or other qualifications? If so, you are responsible for finding an exam centre willing to accept external candidates for the appropriate exam board and for meeting all of the costs of the examination which can be in the region of £150 per subject.

## 7. Can my child do work experience as part of home education?

Many schools provide a short work experience as part of the curriculum and there is no reason why this cannot also be part of a home education experience. If your child accesses a work experience placement, they must be at least 14 years old and you would be responsible for ensuring the suitability of the work experience placement including undertaking risk assessments and checking insurance is in place.

Other employment such as a part time job is not considered to be part of their education. Any employment that your child takes part in will require a work permit issued by the Local Authority and will be restricted in terms of nature and amount as would be the case for all children of compulsory school age.

Apprenticeships are not available to children of compulsory school age. Your child can seek an apprenticeship post-16 and may wish to seek guidance from an organisation such as Ansbury about how to go about this – <https://www.ansbury.co.uk>

## 8. What if my child is young so has not been to school at all yet?

If you are choosing to go straight to home education rather than registering your child at their first school, then you can launch into home education in the way that you see is best for your

child. Some families like to have an official start at the same time as other children start going to school. There may be get togethers of home educators that you could join.

## 9. What about post 16, further education?

Young people up to the age of 18 have the right to attend some form of education or training even if they also have employment. You can continue to home educate or you can help your child to seek an appropriate college course, or a mixture of the two.

## 10. What do I do if my child has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan?

Before removing your child from the school roll we would strongly recommend that you talk to your SEND Provision Lead (this is the person from Dorset Council who ensures that your child's EHCP is kept up to date and reviewed annually). When a child is removed from school roll, access to some SEN support services is limited or no longer universally available to your child. It is therefore important that you are aware of this prior to removal. You have a responsibility to provide an education suitable to your child's special educational needs. The Local Authority will continue to arrange an annual review of the EHC Plan with you.

## 11. What if my child attends a special school?

You will need to write to request consent to deregister your child from a special school. It would be advisable to request an interim review so that everyone who currently supports your child can work together to plan for a successful transition if home education is agreed.

## 12. Can my child's school suggest I home educate?

Schools **must not** seek to persuade parents to educate children at home; the Department for Education states this very clearly. It is called 'off-rolling' and is unacceptable because it places the interests of the school above the needs of the child. If your child's school does suggest this to you, Dorset Council strongly recommends that you contact your Inclusion Lead for advice and guidance before you make any decisions about home education or write to school to remove your child. We can support you and if needed work alongside you to find a solution.

## 13. My child is learning at home because the school is closed. Is this home education?

No, this is not home education. In this instance the school are still responsible for educating your child and should be providing suitable remote learning materials to help them to continue to learn whilst not physically in school. You are likely to be helping your child with their learning

at home, but you are not delivering a full 'home education'. Short term school closures due to Covid 19 are an example of this.

## 14. What about flexi-schooling?

Flexi-schooling is where a child attends school part time and is entirely at the discretion of the Head Teacher. Parents sometimes intend it to be for a short period while a child recovers from an illness, from bullying or other temporary difficulty and sometimes parents intend to continue to home educate for more extended periods.

While flexi schooling involves education at home for part of the time it is not generally considered the same as home education. Flexi schooled children are fully enrolled in a school in the normal way and are therefore subject to the national curriculum and end of Key Stage tests.

## 15. What do I need to do if I decide to home educate?

If your child attends a school you need to inform the school **in writing** that you are removing your child in order to home educate. You do not have to give a reason why, but it would be helpful to the school's understanding if you could. The school will apply a two-week cooling-off period, enabling you to return your child to the school if you change your mind within this time period. Once you have removed your child from the school, they will inform Dorset Council. The Inclusion Lead will then contact you to offer support and to understand the nature of the education that you are delivering. This is important because we have a duty check not just the safety of all children but also that all children are receiving a suitable education. Inclusion Leads have had training from home educators about what home education means and what a suitable education can look like.

If your child is not at a school, it would be helpful if you could let Dorset Council know by contacting your Inclusion Lead. No-one will try to dissuade you; they will listen openly and offer advice and guidance or signpost you to any support that you feel you may need.

## 16. What if I change my mind?

Dorset Council will support you in finding a suitable school place. There is no guarantee there will be a place available at your previous school. An in-year application will need to be submitted. Your Inclusion Lead can help guide you through this process.

## 17. What if parents don't agree on the decision to home educate?

It is important for parents to consult each other over major education decisions. Choices should be child-centred and the child's wishes and feelings are important. It is important to listen to each other and discuss how any concerns will be addressed. Whatever the final decision, communication with your child should be united and reassuring. You may want to ask for help from your Inclusion Lead to explain what home education involves, how it can work and what support is available.

## 18. How will Dorset Council be involved?

There are Inclusion Leads in each of the six localities around Dorset. They are the main point of contact for you. They are there to listen, to find out gently, and to give information, ideas encouragement and reassurance. They will listen with an open mind about what is best for your child, and with the knowledge that you know your child best.

They will want to check that your child is safe, in the same way that we check that schools keep children safe. The best way for them to do this is to be able to speak to your child and listen to them talk about their experience of home education.

They will communicate with you via your preferred method (eg telephone, email, face to face). They will discuss with you how you would like to provide evidence of a suitable education. You do not have to provide this but it would be helpful if you could. This can be with a face to face visit to your home or at a mutually agreed location such as a café or park, but does not have to be. Other examples of how you could do this are:

- Joining an education session
- A written report about the education delivered
- Examples of work which could be in the form of
  - photographs
  - art work / scrapbooks
  - musical and sporting achievements (e.g. certificates)
  - diary of events and activities
  - video/audio recordings / on-line blogs / website content
  - electronic presentations / content
  - items created such as models, woodwork etc.

## 19. What does Dorset Council do with the information that you provide?

We keep a database of children who are home educated, indicating what school they came from (if at a school), if your child has an EHCP, your contact details, your preference for method of communication and how you would like to provide evidence of suitable education. We also capture any information provided about your reasons for home educating. Where these are about a negative experience of school the information enables us to have a picture of where we need to work with schools to better support the needs of students (without referring to individual children).



## 20. What formal measures can Dorset Council take if they do not think I am providing a suitable education?

Inclusion Leads want to work with you and support you. If, however, you do not provide evidence of suitable education, then more formal steps can be taken. This will be after other ways of working with you have been tried and there are still significant concerns. These concerns will be discussed with you. Under [section 437\(1\) Education Act 1996](#), Local Authorities can intervene if it appears that the parents are not providing a suitable education. They can serve a notice in writing on the parent asking the parent to demonstrate that the child is receiving a suitable education and setting a specified period of time in which the parent must demonstrate this. That period of time should not be less than 15 days from the date on which the notice was served.

If the parent fails to satisfy the Local Authority within the notice period that they are providing the child with a suitable education, the Local Authority can serve a School Attendance Order on them. The School Attendance Order can name a school that the child should attend (The Local Authority will consult the school first). This is usually a last resort and should only be done when all reasonable steps have been exhausted. The LA will consider the information it has on a case by case basis. If a SAO is to be used it will be clearly explained to parents before any action is taken.

## 21. What if I would like an advocate?

Advocates can help you get your voice heard in difficult situations. An advocate will help and support you if you or your children have a particular need, i.e if you have a physical health condition or a mental health condition. You can find an advocate to help you if you are finding it difficult to get your voice heard.

For a Home Education Advocate to help you with anything Home Education related contact;  
[zena@homeeducationsw.org.uk](mailto:zena@homeeducationsw.org.uk)  
<http://www.homeeducationsw.org.uk/>

Children and young people can access an advocate from Action for Children.  
For more information about accessing Action for Children's advocacy services, you can call 01202 525643, text 07889 604216 or email  
[bdpadvocacy@actionforchildren.org](mailto:bdpadvocacy@actionforchildren.org)  
<https://services.actionforchildren.org.uk/dorset-services/for-young-people/advocacy-for-children-and-young-people/>

For an Advocate to help you if you have a mental health issue contact the Dorset Mental Health Forum. They have an open referral system for both IMHA and general Mental Health Advocacy. You can contact them directly yourself or ask a friend, relative, nurse, OT or anyone else who is helping you to do this for you.

To contact, telephone the Dorset Mental Health Forum Advocacy Service on 01305 261483 or email at [dmha@dorsetmentalhealthforum.org.uk](mailto:dmha@dorsetmentalhealthforum.org.uk)  
<http://www.dorsetmentalhealthforum.org.uk/advocacy.html>

You can find more advocates on an Internet search. Advocates are free and can be found at many charity organisations.

## 22. What do I do if I am subject to a School Attendance Order (SAO)?

You may not deregister a child where an SAO is in force without the permission of the local authority. If you are thinking of home educating talk to your Inclusion Lead about it and they can advise whether it would be possible. You would need to provide evidence of satisfactory arrangements for home education in order to the SAO to be revoked.

## 23. Will I receive financial support to home educate?

The parent assumes full financial responsibility for the home education of their child, including the cost of any public exams. So you will not receive any financial support for home education. However, you will be able to:

- Borrow books from a local library
- Access free online materials
- Speak to other local home educators about free or discounted opportunities in the area

## 24. Useful Links

DFE EHE guidance for Parents and Local Authorities

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/elective-home-education>

Education Act 1996 [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents)

Education Act 2002 [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents)

Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 2015 o <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 o [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2016/792/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2016/792/contents/made)

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 o [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/contents/made)

European Court of Human Rights Article 2 Amended 2 April 2019 [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Guide\\_Art\\_2\\_Protocol\\_1\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Guide_Art_2_Protocol_1_ENG.pdf)

UNRC Convention on the Rights of the Child <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>

Committee on the Rights of the Child [https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resourceattachments/CRC\\_General\\_Comment\\_1\\_en.pdf](https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resourceattachments/CRC_General_Comment_1_en.pdf)

Children and Families Act 2014 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/section/66/enacted>

## Useful Contacts

EHE Administration: [csbusinesssupport@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:csbusinesssupport@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

### **Inclusion Leads**

East Locality:

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