

Elective Home Education (EHE): update for local authorities

The Government's aim is to ensure all young people receive world-class education to allow them to reach their potential. In turn, we support the right of parents to educate children at home when they wish to do so and can provide a suitable education. Educating children at home works well when it is a positive choice and carried out with proper regard for the needs of the child.

Over the last twelve months of the coronavirus pandemic, most local authorities (LAs) will have seen an increase in notifications from parents about EHE. This has resulted in more children being home educated in most LAs. Feedback through our Regional Education and Children's Teams (REACT), from Partners in Practice and from representative bodies is backed up by data from the Association of Directors of Children's Services' [annual survey into EHE](#) published in November 2020. The survey estimates at least 75,668 children are home educated across all 151 LAs in England. This is a 38% increase on 2019. The most common reason cited by parents for home educating their child was due to health reasons directly related to COVID-19.

Many home educated children will have an overwhelmingly positive learning experience. The Department would hope most parents do so with their child's best education at the heart of the decision to home educate. However, this is not the case for all, and (EHE) can mean some children are less visible to the services that are there to keep them safe and supported in line with their needs.

Engagement

Where a parent/carer has expressed their intention to remove a child from school with a view to educating at home, we recommend that local authorities, schools, and other key professionals (such as social workers) work together to coordinate a meeting with parents/carers where possible. Ideally this would be before a final decision is made. This is to ensure the parent fully considers what is in the best interests of each individual child. This is particularly important where a child has SEND, is vulnerable, and/or has a social worker.

Schools are encouraging parents to send their children to school. Parents who are considering EHE due to concerns around safety should be encouraged to discuss these with their school, to see what safety mitigation measures have been put in place.

Undue pressure from the school could be as a result of off-rolling. Off-rolling is never acceptable and Ofsted continue to look for any evidence of off-rolling. Pressuring a parent to remove their child from the school (including to home educate their child) is a form of off-rolling.

Parent/carer understanding

LAs, schools, and other professionals should work together to help parents and carers understand exactly what EHE means, ensuring it is a positive choice without pressure from their school. Parents should fully understand the

implications of withdrawing their child for EHE and their ongoing obligations, making clear that:

- Parents assume full financial responsibility,
- Their child may not be able to return to the same school if they change their mind,
- Support from schools will not continue, including any special educational needs support, and
- In cases where LAs are not satisfied a child is receiving a suitable education, the parent may be issued with a School Attendance Order (SAO) and / or the court may make an Education Supervision Order. Where necessary - if it is evident that a child is not receiving suitable education at home and the use of a SAO is not achieving a change in that situation - the local authority should be ready to use its safeguarding powers. The overriding objective in these cases is to ensure that the child's development is protected from significant harm.

Admissions

Where a parent decides that they wish their child to return to mainstream school, they will need to apply for a school place. A parent can apply for a place for their child at any time to any school outside the normal admissions round. There is no requirement for local authorities to coordinate in-year applications, but they must provide information in the composite prospectus on how in-year applications can be made and to provide this information to parents on request. Where a parent has been refused a place at a school for which they have applied they have a right of appeal to an independent appeal panel. In addition, where families experience difficulties in securing a school place outside the normal admissions round, Fair Access Protocols exist to ensure that unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, are offered a place at a suitable school as quickly as possible.

Guidance on EHE, including safeguarding powers available to LAs, can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and a short 'what you need to know' document for parents and carers is also available [here](#).