GUIDANCE NOTES FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION
ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

1. Introduction

There are many questions which families should ask when they are considering home education. These guidance notes should help families come to an informed decision as to whether to home educate and support those families who have already made that decision. The information contained in this guidance reflects Northamptonshire’s policy in relation to Elective Home Education.

Northamptonshire County Council recognises and respects parent’s right to educate their children through elective home education and neither dissuades nor encourages parents in making a choice in this regard. Information and advice is available to assist with informed decision making through the website www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/ehe.

If, having read this guidance, you still have any queries; please do not hesitate to contact the Educational Inclusion & Partnership Team via their contact form which can be found at www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/ees. An officer will get back to you to help.

The decision to educate outside the school environment is significant for parents/carers and by opting for Elective Home Education they must also accept responsibility for ensuring their child/children receive efficient, full-time education as described below.

The role of the Educational Inclusion & Partnership Team is to champion the right of all children to receive efficient and suitable education.

Learning Skills & Education
Educational Inclusion & Partnership Team
Old Gaol Block
County Hall
Northampton
NN1 1DN

Web:  www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/ehe
Email:  ehe-admin@northamptonshire.gov.uk
2. The Law

2.1 Do children have to go to school?
The Education Act 1996 states that it is the duty of parents to secure an appropriate education for their children. This can be done either by regular attendance at school or “otherwise”. For most children, this means that they will attend the school which serves their local community but for a wide variety of reasons, a minority of parents decide to take on the “duty to educate” their children themselves.

2.2 What is a parent’s Statutory Duty?
Under section 7 of the 1996 Act, it is the parent's duty:

“to cause (the child) to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his (or her) age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he (or she) may have either by regular attendance at school or “otherwise.”

2.3 What is “Efficient” and “Suitable” Education?
These words are not defined in the Act. Education, however, has been deemed to be “efficient” if it achieves what it sets out to achieve and “suitable” if it prepares the child for life in our society and also enables the child to achieve his/her full potential. Certainly what is provided does not need to be the same kind of “lessons” as are provided at school.

It is up to the parent to show the Local Authority that the Planned Programme of Education is helping the child to learn and that the child is developing according to his/her age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs he/she may have.

3. The Curriculum

3.1 What constitutes a curriculum?
Whether provided in school or at home, the curriculum consists of everything which is done in order to educate the child. It should cater for the child’s physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual development.

For pupils attending school the curriculum should be broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated. In other words:

Broad It should introduce the pupils to a wide range of knowledge, understanding and skills.
Balanced Each part should be allotted sufficient time to make its own special contribution but not so much that is squeezes out other essential parts of the learning.
Relevant Subjects should be taught so as to bring out their application 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 needs to be matched to the pupil’s abilities and aptitude. It should also be sufficiently challenging so that a child can show that progress is being made.

A good curriculum includes literacy, numeracy and science along with other elements dealt with at an appropriate level. Ideally include personal and social education, health education, outdoor and environmental education, economics and industrial understanding, citizenship, careers education, food technology and information technology.

If you choose to educate your child/children at home you must consider the curriculum in planning your Planned Programme of Education for your child.

3.2 Does the National Curriculum apply to Elective Home Education?
The National Curriculum does not apply to children educated at home but you may wish your child to enter or re-enter mainstream education at some point in the future. Re-integration is easier if you take the requirements of the National Curriculum into account when planning your Planned Programme of Education.

What you teach and how your child learns is up to you, provided that you can describe the ways in which the education is “efficient” and “suitable”.

There is no one form of 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” but it is a good idea, when explaining your plans, to indicate your longer term plan and the way in which you intend to achieve your goals.

4. Communicating the choice to Electively Home Educate

4.1 For pre-school age children
If your child is of pre-school age then you do not have to do anything although it would help us considerably in keeping track of those who are being educated at home if you could inform the Educational Inclusion & Partnership Team via the online contact form at www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/ees stating that you intend to educate your child at home and the date from which you intend this to happen.
4.2 For children of statutory school age

4.21 With a current school place
If you are withdrawing your child from school you must do both of the following:

- write to the Head Teacher of your child’s school to inform him/her of your intention and to ask for the child’s name to be removed from the school roll;
- inform the Educational Inclusion & Partnership Team via the online contact form so that your child can be registered as Electively Home Educated.

The head teacher will then take off your child’s name from the school roll (unless your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs in which case refer to 7.3)

4.2.2 Not on a school roll
If your child’s name is not currently on a school roll, and you decide to home educate, then you should inform the Local Authority via the Educational Inclusion & Partnership Team contact form at www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/ees so that they can be registered as Electively Home Educated.

5. Next steps for parents/carers

5.1 Useful questions for you to consider:

- How are you planning to ensure that your child is offered a curriculum that meets their needs and ensures they achieve their potential?

- What are your short and longer-term plans?

- Have you considered how you might link together different subjects or topics?

- How do you provide for your child’s physical development?

- How do you arrange for your child to meet and play with others?

- How is the work to be organised?
• How do you plan a mixture of work, including practical activities, as well as written tasks?

• Are you likely to enlist the support of a tutor?

• How will you record your child’s progress/difficulties?

• Will your programme allow later access to further/higher education if appropriate?

• Will a wide range of career opportunities and life chances be available to your child?

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Answers are unique to you as educators of your child/children.

5.2 Within four weeks you should be able to provide details of how you intend to organise the home education. A letter will prompt you to submit the Planned Programme of Education. Details including the Planned Programme of Education, any books and materials you intend to use and any other people you intend to use to help him/her learn would be useful information. You should also bear in mind that once you decide to educate your child at home that you become solely responsible for providing the necessary resources and schemes of work for your child’s education. We recognise that it may take some time to provide the finer details of the programme but at this stage we would expect to see evidence of a coherent educational philosophy.

5.3 You do not have to produce a written timetable as these do not have to be rigid but you should be able to show that you are serious and systematic about what you are doing. It is your responsibility to plan and carry out your arrangements. We may be able to offer informal advice from time to time but we cannot undertake either to direct your child’s learning or to provide books or other equipment.

6. Next steps for Local Authority

Once your Planned Programme of Education has been received, the Local Authority will examine your submission with these questions in mind:

6.1 Is the learning process active, practical, participative and systematically planned?

6.2 Does the planned learning take full advantage of all the resources available locally?
6.3 *Is importance given to literacy and numeracy?*

6.4 *Has a programme of educational visits been planned?*

6.5 *Are learning opportunities prepared in advance and followed up afterwards?*

6.6 *Are opportunities provided to support physical development?*

6.7 *Are there planned opportunities for social interaction to take place in different contexts?*

6.8 *Are there a variety of approaches to learning using different styles and approaches to learning?*

6.9 *Are there opportunities for independent study and research?*

6.10 *Is there a considered use of Information Technology?*

If the Local Authority are satisfied with the programme a confirmation letter will be sent to you.

If the Local Authority feels that the education you are providing fails to offer your child a suitable education, you will be told the reasons and given the opportunity to amend the programme.

7. **Local Authority role in ensuring children get their educational entitlement**

7.1 Under Section 437 (1) of the Act, the Local Authority must satisfy itself that parents are fulfilling their duties. If you do not provide any evidence of this, either in written form or by discussions with the Authority then it may be seen that your child is not being effectively educated and we would then take steps to secure the child’s return to school.

7.2 **Elective Home Education for a child with a statement of Special Educational Need (SEN)**

7.2.1 If your child has a Statement of SEN and you wish to home educate, we will write to you to inform you of the LA’s statutory obligations regarding pupils with a Statement and to request details of how you intend to meet the pupil’s needs as specified on the Statement.
7.2.2 If your child has attended a Special School and it is named on their Statement of Special Educational Needs then their name will remain on the Special School roll until it is confirmed that you are providing suitable education.

7.2.3 When the details of your programme are received, an LA Special Needs Officer will determine whether you are able to meet your child’s special needs. We will discuss any concerns with you before determining how best to proceed. It may be that your child’s Statement will be amended or withdrawn. Your child’s needs and welfare are paramount in all deliberations.

8. **Helpful Hints**

**DO:**

- consider the decision to home educate as seriously as you would the decision about which school you would choose to meet their needs

- plan how you intend to deliver your child’s education before making a decision to home educate as your child’s life chances are at stake

- look at the costs involved both in terms of resources such as visits, equipment, books and the commitment of time and energy required in delivering a suitable education

- plan to provide opportunities for your child to be involved in social activities, make contact with other children and do joint activities with other children and groups

- keep open the option to reintegrate your child into the school system as your child’s needs may change at different ages and stages

**DO NOT:**

- take your child out of school simply because you have a disagreement with the school or there are unresolved issues such as bullying. In such circumstances, seek an opportunity to talk to the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors who should be able to resolve the situation.

9. **Moving from Elective Home Education back to school**

If you decide that it is in the interests of your child to continue their education in a school rather than at home, the Admissions Team will advise on how to apply for a school place. There is information, advice and guidance on
www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/admissions or the team can be contacted through the NCC Customer Services Centre.

If a young person has been out of education for less than 12 months there is an expectation that they will return to the school where they were last on roll providing there is place available and there are no significant issues that would prevent this. Please advise the Educational Inclusion & Partnership Team of your decision and they can support with mediation and reintegration.
Appendix 1

Flexi-Schooling

Flexi-schooling is an arrangement between the parent and the school where the child is registered at school and attends the school only part time; the rest of the time the child is home educated. The arrangement is a legal option but requires the Head Teacher to agree it and the school must include flexi-schooling arrangements in their attendance policy. All absences on agreed flexi-schooling sessions are recorded as authorised. The child will be required to follow the National Curriculum whilst at school but are not required to do so while educated at home.