

Elective Home Education

Report from Head of Education and Learning

1. Reasons children become home educated

The reasons underpinning parents' decisions to withdraw their children to be home educated are many, complex and varied. National reports from Ofsted suggest that "off-rolling" [also highlighted in the Timpson Review of School Exclusions (May 2019)] may be a factor as can challenge over poor attendance. An increase in children and young people in Devon with emotional and mental health problems facing long waiting times for assessment, and support is another contributing factor.

The Elective Home Education (EHE) Service collect and collate the principal reasons given by parents for why they have chosen to home educate their child. The following reasons feature prominently:

- Lifestyle, cultural, philosophical choice
- Poor attendance being challenged
- Health issues of child – specifically anxiety
- Dissatisfaction with SEN provision or school environment
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The Education Welfare Service and the Elective Home Education Service work closely together to offer Early Help in order to support the family and prevent inappropriate withdrawals from school.

2. Legal requirements relating to Elective Home Education (EHE)

If a child has never attended school, there is currently no legal requirement on parents to register with the EHE Service. Schools are however legally required to inform the local authority if a child is removed from the school to become electively home educated, or to attend another school. Once a child is removed from a school roll the parent becomes responsible for ensuring the child receives their statutory right to an education. The DfE state that "The responsibility for a child's education rests with their parents. In England, education is compulsory, but school is not." The EHE Service recently introduced a form for parents to sign to say that they understand what is expected of them in relation to Elective Home Education and the entitlements they are relinquishing.

Once a child is registered as EHE there is no statutory requirement on parents to regularly provide evidence of the education the child is receiving. The EHE Service suggest, in their leaflet for parents that it would be wise to provide evidence if requested. Crucially, from a safeguarding perspective, there is no legal requirement on the parents to allow access to the child. The local authority however has a duty to intervene if there are concerns that a suitable education is not being provided or if there are safeguarding concerns. The local authority may therefore make an 'informal enquiry' from time to time to check that the education being provided is suitable and of good quality.

The Government is currently consulting on a change to the law which would require all parents to register with their local authority if they have a child who is electively home educated. It would also give the local authority the right to see the child. Whilst this is welcomed, if the legislation is introduced it will increase the number of families supported and will need to be accompanied by appropriate levels of funding

Support provided by the EHE Service

The EHE Service is commissioned by the local authority as part of our contract with Babcock LDP. This service offers a range of support including:

- [Website information](#) including links to a range of curriculum resources

- Initial home visit to all families
- On-going support via telephone, email and website
- Additional visits where there are concerns around the EHE provision or where there are safeguarding concerns
- Annual visits offered to all children with EHCP's or with significant SEN issues
- Liaison with other agencies & attendance at multi-agency meetings

The service frequently receives positive feedback from parents and this is reported to DCC Commissioners in the quarterly reports. Recent examples are:

"Thank you so much for all of the info and for coming to visit us. We found the visit really useful and you very quickly understood X and his needs. We have changed the pace and given X more choice. We are talking less and observing more and give X more time to process language. All of this is really helping so thank you many times over."

"Thank-you for sending us the information and links. It was very helpful to be able to discuss everything with you and good to be able to show you the home learning environment we have created for the girls, thank-you for your comments".

[Devon Independent Advice and Support service](#) also provide information for parents of children with SEN.

4. Action taken if there are concerns about the suitability of the EHE provision

Initially, additional visits are offered by the EHE team if the EHE provision is not meeting the duty of the parent to ensure that their child is receiving a suitable education. Evidence is requested from the parent and if this is not forthcoming or the education is deemed unsuitable (all the EHE advisors are qualified teachers) then the service liaises with the Education Welfare Service in order to initiate the School Attendance Order process.

Should this process not result in the child being returned to school or evidence being provided that they are receiving a suitable education in some other way, then the local authority will issue a School Attendance Order. This order enables an officer of the local authority to require the parent to take certain actions with regard to the provision of education for their child. These steps are not taken lightly; they are used in order to ensure that the child's statutory right to an education is met. If the order is not complied with it will be progressed to the family court.

Where EHE is considered unsuitable, children are also tracked through 'Missing Monday Meetings' which oversees all children missing education.

The EHE Service aims to support, with the local authority, as many children as possible back into school. In the period 01.09.2018 – 02.05.19, 188 children returned to school. 38 returned to the same school whilst 150 chose to return to a different school. 11 pupils in total returned to EHE after a short stay in the new school.

5. EHE data

Devon reflects the national trend in seeing a steep increase in the number of children being taken out of school to be electively home educated (the numbers have more than doubled in the past five years). There has been a 25% increase in the last year. However there has been a 73% increase in new referrals compared with the same period last year (note some EHE children return to school so the overall number does not reflect the increase in those becoming EHE).

*Numbers of students registered as EHE at some point during the academic year:

Academic Year	Number of registered EHE students*	% of total school population
2013/14	750	0.4
2014/15	766	0.4
2015/16	1018	1.1
2016/17	1275	1.4
2017/18	1588	1.6

The table below shows that over the past 5 years more boys than girls have been home educated.

Academic Year	% boys	% girls
2013/14	51.5	48.5
2014/15	56.3	43.7
2015/16	54.7	45.3
2016/17	52.0	48.0
2017/18	53.3	46.7

The percentage of EHE students who have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) has remained relatively stable, despite the increase in numbers.

Academic Year	Number with statement / EHCP	% of EHE population
2013/14	44	5.8%
2014/15	37	4.8%
2015/16	37	3.6%
2016/17	57	4.5%
2017/18	72	4.5%

As part of our improvement process, work has now started through a local authority Task and Finish Group to review Elective Home Education with specific focus around the increase in children with SEND leaving school to access EHE. The final report is due towards October 2019.

Census Data

Every year in October and January schools across the country are required to record the number and ethnicity etc of pupils they have on their school roles (Census Day). From October 18 EHE data has also been recorded in this way in the hope that in the future national bench marking data will be available.

The figures below show the information for EHE students on 17/01/19 (school census day).

The information provided below is just a snapshot of one day whereas the figures provided above show the numbers of pupils who have been, at some point, electively home educated that year.

Number of EHE pupils registered	1243
Number of EHE pupils not registered	222* (This figure includes children picked up by ONE team as EHE but not yet of school age)
Number of girls	588 (47.3%)
Number of boys	650(52.3%)
Number of EHE registered eligible for FSM	291 (23.4%)
Number with EHCP	71 (5.7%)
Number who previously had SEN support	283 students (22.8%)
Number who are Children in Need	30 (2.47%)
Of which are on a Child Protection Plan	5 (0.4%)

Registered EHE Pupils by Year Group

0	17
1	59
2	68
3	82
4	85
5	95
6	86
7	93
8	100
9	156
10	155
11	247

An increasing trend in the last 2-3 years is the number of children being withdrawn at Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11). Parents tell us that this is because they do not consider that the curriculum is meeting their child's needs. The requirement on schools to report on Progress 8 Scores is effectively restricting their ability to offer functional skills or a range of vocational qualifications for those pupils for whom many academic subjects are inappropriate. Some parents are therefore choosing to withdraw their child from school in order to attend a part time college course.

Registered Pupils by Ethnicity	
Ethnicity	Registered
OOEG - Other Ethnic Group	*
Not Known	187
MOTH - Any Oth Mixed b'ground	6
WWEU - White Western Euro'n	10
WTUR - Turkish/Turkish Cypriot	4
MWBA - White and Black African	7
APKN - Pakistani	*
MWBC - White & Black Caribbean	6
CHKC - Hong Kong Chinese	*
NOBT - Info not yet obtained	5
WEEU - White Eastern Euro'n	5
WOTW - White Other	13
WBRI - White British	919
REFU - Refused	34
WENG - White English	10
WIRI - White Irish	*
WROO - Other Gypsy/Roma	*
WROM - Gypsy/Roma	22
MWAS - White and Asian	9

* In line with DfE guidelines numbers under 5 have been suppressed.

Reason for EHE	All registered students
Dissatisfaction with the school environment	194
Lifestyle/Philosophical/Culture	240
Attendance/Prosecution	44
Medical - Child	80
Medical - Parent	3
School refuser/phobic	45
Bullying	56
Emotional behavioural difficulties	149
Near Exclusion	9
Other	73
Dissatisfaction with SEN provision	38
Relationship issues	2
Not preferred school	18
No reason recorded	122
Not known (at time of recording on ONE)	169
Religious Beliefs	1

Examples of dissatisfaction with the school environment include:

- Parents being unhappy with the pressures placed on children due to SATs
- Parents considering the curriculum not to be meeting their child's needs (too focused on providing academic qualifications rather than the life skills they will need in the future)
- Parents considering school uniform dress code being applied too rigidly
- The use of sanctions such as internal exclusion resulting in their child not accessing an education
- Lack of communication between school and home
- Support plans being drawn up but then parents perceiving them not to be fully implemented

Examples of dissatisfaction with the SEN provision include:

- Parents wanting a special school place for their child because they do not consider a mainstream school can meet their child's specific needs
- Level of support being provided by a school not considered sufficient by parents
- Parents lacking confidence in teachers' understanding of their child's needs – recommendations made by professionals e.g. educational psychologists not being followed up

In order to try and ensure that parents who remove their children from school do so because this is a genuine desire to home educate and not because they feel it is the only option open to them.

The following steps have been put in place:

- Identification of those schools with a high number of children taken off roll to be EHE and gain clarity behind the reasons.
- Offer Early Help to parents whose children are struggling with attendance in order to avoid prosecution.
- Ensure that schools are using the Graduated Response Tool to properly identify and meet the needs of SEND children.
- Improve access to Early Help and other child health services
- Work with schools to deliver the newly launched No Need To Exclude toolkit commissioned by Devon County Council.

Dawn Stabb

Head of Education and Learning

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for [Children, Schools and Skills](#): Councillor James McInnes

Chief Officer for Childrens Services: Jo Olsson

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

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