

HOME EDUCATION

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS
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December 2005

HOME EDUCATION

Aberdeenshire Council Education & Recreation Service is committed to working with parents to make sure that their children can get the best possible start in life.

This includes providing all children with education that meets their needs and recognising that some parents may wish to educate their children at home.

It is hoped that the following information is helpful to parents who wish to educate their children at home.

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What is the Legal Position?

There is extensive legislation relating to education (which includes home education).

The main points are summarised as follows:

Every child of school age has a right to education which must be directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child to their fullest potential. Furthermore, if children wish to express a view on their education then this should be considered taking into account their age and maturity.

Parents have a responsibility to provide efficient education for their children of school age suitable to their age, ability and aptitude. This can be done by regular attendance at a school or by other means (e.g. home education).

Education authorities are required to take into account the parent's views in relation to their children's education.

Where children attend local authority schools, then the education authority must give consent before parents withdraw their children from school for home education. See page 2 for information on occasions when consent is not required.

If an education authority has concerns over the home education being provided then they must take action.

How do parents withdraw a child from school for home education?

The procedure for Aberdeenshire Education & Recreation Service is as follows:

- Parents must write to the Education Network Manager (formerly Senior Education & Recreation Officer/Education Officer) for the area in Aberdeenshire in which they live (addresses are in the useful contacts section of this guide) informing that they wish to home educate and requesting consent to withdraw their child from school. This should be done as early as possible and before the date they wish to withdraw their child from school.

In the meantime the child must continue to attend school until consent is granted. The letter should also include proposals on how they intend to provide efficient education for their child. An explanation of efficient education is provided on page 3 of this guide. Any views expressed by their child must be considered.

- The Education Network Manager will acknowledge the request and consider as soon as possible whether there is any evidence indicating that there may be good reason to refuse consent.
- If there is no evidence to suggest that consent should be withheld and parents have provided an indication of how they would provide efficient education through home education and where possible the proposed resources they would use, then consent can be granted.
- If further information is required before a decision can be made, including further information from parents on how they intend to provide an efficient education, this will be gathered where reasonably practical, and where possible within 21 days. The views of the child will also be considered, where reasonably practicable.

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- If the Education Network Manager is concerned that the information provided by the parent indicates that efficient education cannot be provided, then parents will be notified in writing that consent is being withheld and reasons for the decision and grounds for refusal will be set out. Consent will not be unreasonably withheld. Parents will be invited to address the grounds for refusal and re-submit their request for reconsideration.
- Other instances when consent may not be granted immediately include:
 - where a child has been referred to social work or the police for child protection reasons, and the matter is being investigated
 - where the child is on the child protection register
 - where a child has been referred to the reporter on care and protection grounds, and the referral is being considered
 - where the child is the subject of a supervision requirement.

In these cases, the Education Network Manager will gather any relevant information that will assist in reaching a decision.

- Parents may be invited to meet with the Education Network Manager at a mutually acceptable location to discuss their proposals or provision. The child may attend this meeting to give their views or their views can be given in other ways. A written account of the meeting will be sent to the parents.

Do parents always have to seek consent to home educate?

Parents do not have to seek consent to home educate if

- their child has never attended a local authority school
- their child is being withdrawn from an independent school
- their child has finished primary education in one school but has not started secondary education in another
- the school the child has been attending has closed.

In the above cases, it is helpful if parents notify by letter their Education Network Manager of the area in which they live that they intend to home educate. If not the Education Network Manager will make enquiries to ascertain the whereabouts of their child. In all other cases, parents must write to their Education Network Manager requesting consent to withdraw their child from school in order to home educate.

Can parents appeal against the education authority's decision?

If parents are not happy with the decision, having already provided additional information, then they should write to the Head of Service (Schools), Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen AB16 5GB, with details of their complaint.

In the first instance there will be the opportunity to use a mediation service, if the parent and education authority are in agreement. The mediation service will be provided by an independent organisation.

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Alternatively, or if the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of mediation, he or she may request the Head of Service (Schools) to arrange for a report to be written and presented to the Council's Education of Children at Home Sub-Committee for consideration. Parents will be given a copy of the report and will be strongly encouraged to meet with the Sub-Committee. Should the Sub-Committee serve an attendance order on parents, the parents have 14 days to appeal to the Sheriff, who may confirm, vary, or annul the order and whose decision will be final.

What is efficient and suitable education?

There is no specific definition of efficient and suitable education. One approach to education is not necessarily more efficient than another. However, it would be expected that any education provision would include all of the following:

- an underlying approach or philosophy that show commitment to and enthusiasm for the child's education and takes into account the child's needs, attitudes and aspirations
- consistent involvement of parents in their child's education, although they may not actively be involved in providing the education. This, for instance, could be through distance learning packages or using tutors. Additional information on using tutors can be found on page 15 under Child Protection
- opportunities for the child to be stimulated by their learning experiences
- a wide range of activities that fit in with the child's interests appropriate to their stage of development
- access to resources and materials. This would include paper, pens, books, libraries, art and craft materials, physical activity, computer technology, opportunities to mix with other children and adults.

What about children with special educational needs?

Parents still have the same right to choose home education if their child has special educational needs or additional support needs. The child may or may not have a Record of Need or a Co-ordinated Support Plan under the new Additional Support for Learning Act.

However, where a child has special educational needs or additional support needs, there will be other issues to consider, depending on the particular need of the child. These may include

- how the parents intend to meet the child's special education needs or additional support needs
- the environment in which the child is to be educated – for example this can be crucial for a child with autism
- involvement of an educational psychologist in assessing the proposed education provision.

Where a child has a Record of Needs, this will be drafted appropriately in consultation with the parents to indicate education at home. Aberdeenshire Education & Recreation will continue to review the child's Record whilst being educated at home to ensure that the education being provided is suitable, taking account of the child's special educational

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needs or additional support needs. This is a legal requirement. However, the education authority and parents may agree that it is no longer necessary for the Record to remain open.

If a Future Needs Assessment is required, Aberdeenshire Education & Recreation will provide a report on the provision that would benefit the child after reaching the school leaving age.

If the Record of Needs specifies that particular provision must be in place in the home, Aberdeenshire Education & Recreation, in discussion with parents, will consider how this will take place.

What support can parents expect from the education authority whilst home educating?

The education authority at its discretion is able to support parents who choose to home educate. Advice can be provided:

- on curricular provision and resources that may be useful
- about resources that may be available through Aberdeenshire's Library and Information Service
- on work experience placements
- on computer hardware and software for children with additional support needs
- from the Educational Psychology Service

Contact should be made with the appropriate Education Network Manager in the first instance.

Will the education authority contact parents who are home educating?

Aberdeenshire's Education & Recreation Service aims to be as supportive as possible to parents who are home educating. To do this an Education Network Manager will write to parents, usually on an annual basis.

The purpose of this is to ascertain how the home education is progressing, to offer advice and support and to answer any question that parents may have.

If there are concerns about the education being provided, more frequent contact may be made, with a view to helping parents improve their provision.

Following all contacts a report will be written by the Education Network Manager and shared with parents.

Parents should also feel free to contact their Education Network Manager for information and advice and if necessary to arrange a visit.

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Where at all possible it is helpful if the annual contact can take the form of a visit to the home situation. This enables the Education Network Manager to see the child in their own learning environment and see the education provision first hand. However, such visits are not compulsory and parents may provide details of their educational provision by alternative means, for example, a written report.

If there are serious concerns over the education being provided, and parents have been given a reasonable opportunity to improve their provision a report will be written by the Education Network Manager and referred to the Education of Children at Home Sub-committee for consideration. Where parents are not providing efficient education suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of the child, a notice would be served on parents requiring them within the time specified in the notice to provide such information as the authority may require regarding the means adopted for providing education. The parents can either meet with the Education of Children at Home Sub-Committee in person to provide the information or provide the information in writing. Where parents fail to satisfy the Education of Children at Home Sub-Committee that efficient education suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of the child is being provided or that there is reasonable excuse for their failure to do so, then an Attendance Order will be made. The Sub-committee has the power to serve an Attendance Order on parents. The Attendance Order names a school that the child must attend if the Sub-committee is not satisfied that the education provided is efficient and suitable. Once an attendance order has been served, the parent has 14 days to appeal to the Sheriff, who may confirm, vary or annul the order, and whose decision will be final.

Study Options for Educational Qualifications

The following information sets out some of the options available to home educating families who wish to provide opportunities for their children to study for recognised qualifications outwith school. This is not an exhaustive list, but sets out the main options available and provides contact details for relevant organisations. The information contained here is also liable to change from time to time.

Enrolment at a Further Education College

Some colleges may, at the discretion of the Principal, be willing to accept children of school age for full and part-time courses. This approach has the advantage that all the work and entry for qualifications is organised by the college, but it does require at least some attendance at classes which may not appeal to all home education families. If a student enrolls at a FE college, their parents will be liable to pay all of the course fees themselves unless the education authority is willing to provide funding. Colleges also have the discretion to waive fees, which they tend to do for low income families in accordance with Scottish Further Education Funding Council's fee waiver policy.

Self-study

Many home educating families prefer not to enrol for attendance at a further education college, and choose instead to work independently towards qualifications. Because of compulsory internal assessment components, there are many subjects and qualifications which are not available to external candidates unless an appropriate arrangement can be made with an approved centre which meets with the examining board's requirements. Some centres and examining boards may be willing to accept coursework which has been marked and authenticated by a private tutor.

Families who study for qualifications from home will need to:

- contact the relevant examination board to find out about their requirements;
- register with an approved centre for their child to be presented for the qualification; and
- pay a registration fee for each subject their child will take.

It may also be possible for a group of home educators to consider seeking approved status in their own right. Further information on this can be obtained from the SQA (contact details below).

Correspondence Courses

Correspondence courses can be an option for students who prefer to work independently, though they will be required in most cases to follow a structured curriculum and programme of work. Correspondence courses offer a wide range of qualifications at different levels and the organisations offering these courses will advise about arrangements which need to be made for registering with an examination centre and for marking and authenticating coursework. The cost of this option varies depending on the organisation and the qualification and the qualification chosen, but can prove expensive.

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There are increasing number of organisations offering open and distance learning courses. The following contacts provide a useful start in finding a suitable course and organisation:

- *The Open and Distance Learning Quality Council (ODLQC)* is an independent body which accredits open and distance learning courses. The ODLQC produces a free information leaflet which lists all approved organisations and their courses.

Contact: 16 Park Crescent, London, W1B 1AH
Tel: 020 7612 7090
Fax: 020 7612 7092
Website: www.odlqc.org.uk
E-mail: info@odlqc.org.uk

- *The Association of British Correspondence Colleges (ABCC)* is a voluntary association of colleges which comply with a code of ethics.

Contact: PO Box 17926, London SW19 3WB
Tel: 020 8544 9559
Fax: 020 8540 7657
Website: www.nationline.co.uk/abcc
E-mail: abcc@msn.com

- *The British Association for Open learning (BAOL)* promotes quality and best practice in open, flexible and distance forms of learning. BAOL members work to a code of practice for open learning and are listed on the BAOL website.

Contact: Suite 12, Pixmore House
Pixmore Avenue
Letchworth
Hertfordshire, SG6 1JG
Tel: 01462 485 588
Fax: 01462 485 633
Website: www.british-learning.com
E-mail: info@british-learning.com

Alternative Qualifications

The internal assessment component of many UK qualifications courses such as Standard Grades, National Qualifications and GCSEs can restrict the choice available to home educated students. The following qualifications have, however, been identified as particularly suited to home study students as they are not dependent on internal assessment and moderation.

National Christian Schools Certificate (NCSC)

The National Christian Schools' Certificate (NCSC) provides a graduated series of certificates, ranging from Level 1, which is equivalent to 5 GCSEs (grades A*-C), through Level 2, which is equivalent to 2 AS/A2 passes, and culminating with Level 3, which is equivalent to 3 AS/A2 passes (grades A-C). There is also an Honours Certificate, which is awarded to pupils who show exceptional performance. Examinations are conducted at home under the supervision of parents, but the NCSC Board has strict moderation procedures to ensure the validity of results. The course is highly structured and requires a minimum pass mark of 80 per cent for each module test. During the course of 2004, the NCSC is to be superseded by the International Certificate of Christian Education, which will have very similar content and standards to the NCSC Certificate programme.

Contact: The European Academy for Christian Homeschooling (TEACH)
Marantha House, Unit 5
Northford Close, Shrivenham
Swindon
Wiltshire SN6 8HL
Tel: 01793 783783
Fax: 01793 783775
Website: www.christian-education.org
E-mail: admin@ncscboard.org.uk
cee@christian-education.org

Examining Boards

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

The SQA is the national body in Scotland responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment, and certification of qualifications other than degrees.

Contact: Hanover House
24 Douglas Street
Glasgow G2 7NQ
Telephone Helpdesk: 0141 242 2214
Fax: 0141 242 2244
Website: www.sqa.org.uk
E-mail: Customer@sqa.org.uk

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA)

The AQA is one of three unitary examining bodies in England incorporating the now merged Associated Examining Board and the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board. The AQA also has responsibility for the City and Guilds' GNVQ qualification.

Contact: Devas Street
Manchester M15 6EX
Tel: 0161 953 1180
Fax: 0161 273 7572
Website: <http://www.aqa.org.uk>
E-mail: mailbox@aqa.org.uk

Oxford Cambridge & RSA (OCR)

OCR is one of three unitary examining bodies in England incorporating the RSA (Royal Society of Arts), UCLES (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate), and MEG (Midland Examining Group).

Contact: OCR Information Bureau, General Qualifications:
1 Hills Road
Cambridge CB1 2EU
Tel: 01223 553998
Fax: 01223 552627
Website: <http://www.ocr.org.uk>
E-mail: helpdesk@ocr.org.uk

OCR Information Bureau, Vocational Qualifications:
Progress House
Westwood Way
Coventry CV4 8JQ
Tel: 024 7647 0033
Fax: 024 646 8080
E-mail; cib@ocr.org.uk

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Edexcel

Edexcel was formed in 1996 by the merger of BTEC and the University of London Examinations and Assessment Council (ULEAC). Edexcel is one of the main examination boards for England and Wales.

Contact: Edexcel
Stewart house
32 Russell Square
London WC1B 5DN
Tel: 0870 240 9800
Fax: 020 7759 6920
Website: <http://www.edexcel.org.uk>
E-mail: enquiries@edexcel.org.uk

CONTACTS

Area Education Offices

- Banff & Buchan Education Office
2nd Floor, St Leonard's
Sandyhill Road
Banff
AB45 1BH
Tel: 01261 813340
- Buchan Education Office
Old Infant Building
Prince Street
Peterhead
AB42 1PL
Tel: 01779 473269
- Formartine Education Office
Towie House
Manse Road
Turriff
AB53 4AY
Tel: 01888 562427
- Garioch Education Office
Gordon House
Blackhall Road
Inverurie
AB51 3WA
Tel: 01467 620981
- Marr, Kincardine & Mearns Education
Office
Queens Road
Stonehaven
AB39 2HQ
Tel: 01569 766960

Home Education Organisations

Education Otherwise

A charity and self-help network offering support and information to home educating families and those considering home education, in Scotland and throughout the UK.

Contact: PO Box 7420
London N9 9SG
Tel: 0870 730 0074
Website: www.education-otherwise.org
E-mail: enquiries@education-otherwise.org

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Home Education Advisory Service

A UK-wide organisation for home educators and those thinking about home educating.

Contact: 10 Chalton Road
Bridge of Allan
Stirling FK9 4DX
Tel: 01786 831 066
Website: www.heas.org.uk
E-mail: enquiries@heas.org.uk

Schoolhouse Home Education Association

A Scottish organisation which offers information and support to families who have chosen or are contemplating home education.

Contact: PO Box 28496
Edinburgh EH4 4YU
Tel: 0870 745 0968
Website: www.schoolhouse.org.uk
E-mail: info@schoolhouse.org.uk

Home education organisations also have local branches affiliated to them. Further information available from the individual organisations.

Highland Home Educators

Contact: 23 Neil Gunn Crescent
Inverness IV2 3EL
Tel: 01463 232 571
E-mail: Alison@sauer.demon.co.uk

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS

Contact a Family Scotland

Extensive information service including details on local and Scottish wide parent support groups.

Contact: Norton Park
57 Albion Road
Edinburgh EH7 5QY
Tel: 0131 475 2608
Fax: 0131 475 2609
Helpline: 0808 808 3555
Website: www.cafamily.org.uk
E-mail: Scotland@cafamily.org.uk

Disability Rights Commission

DRC provides advice, conciliation and legal enforcement services.

Contact: 1st Floor, Riverside House
502 Gorgie Road
Edinburgh EH11 3AF
Tel: 0131 444 4300
Fax: 0131 444 4301
Text: 0131 444 4302
Website: www.drc-gb.org
E-mail: enquiry@drc-gb.org

Enquire

National special educational needs information and advice service. Scottish Executive funded information service for parents.

Contact: Princes House
5 Shandwick Place
Edinburgh EH2 4RG
Helpline: 0845 1232303
Typetalk: 0800 959598
Website: www.childreninscotland.or.uk/enquire
E-mail: enquire.SENinfo@childreninscotland.org.uk

ISEA

Independent Special Education Advice

Contact: 164 High Street
Dalkeith EH22 1AY
Tel: 0131 454 0096
Helpline: 0131 454 0082
Fax: 0131 454 0096
E-mail: isea@whsmithnet.co.uk

Scottish Child Law Centre

Independent legal advice.

Contact: 54 East Crosscauseway
Edinburgh EH8 9HD
Tel: 0131 667 6333
Helpline: 0800 328 8970
Fax: 0131 662 1713
Website: www.sclc.org.uk
E-mail: enquiries@sclc.org.uk

SHS

Training for disabled people and their families, with focus on empowerment.

Contact: 1A Washington Court
Washington Lane
Edinburgh EH11 2HA
Tel: 0131 538 7717
Fax: 0131 538 7719
Website: www.shstrust.org.uk
E-mail: general@shstrust.org.uk

SKILL Scotland

Services for young people and adults with disabilities in further and higher education and employment.

Contact: Norton Park
57 Albion Road
Edinburgh EH7 5QY
Tel: 0131 475 2348
Website: www.skill.org
E-mail: admin@skillscotland.org.uk

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Learning & Teaching Scotland

Learning and Teaching Scotland is a national public body sponsored by the Scottish Executive Education Department. LT Scotland's remit is to provide advice, support and resources to enhance the quality of educational experiences in Scotland.

Contact: 74 Victoria Crescent Road
Glasgow G12 9JN
Tel: 0141 337 5000
Fax: 0141 337 5050

Or

Gardyne Road
Dundee DD5 1NY
Tel: 01382 443 600
Fax: 01382 443 645
Website: www.ltscotland.org.uk
E-mail: enquiries@ltscotland.org.uk

Scottish Executive Education Department

Contact: School Division
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ
Tel: 0131 556 8400
Website: www.scotland.gov.uk
E-mail: ceu@scotland.gov.uk

Careers Scotland

Careers Scotland can offer advice on college, university, employment and training opportunities.

Contact: Aberdeenshire South
Careers Scotland
377 Union Street
Aberdeen
Tel: 01224 285200

Aberdeenshire Central
Unit 6, Garioch Centre
Constitution Street
Inverurie AB51 4UY
Tel: 01467 623623

Aberdeenshire North
Careers Scotland
9 Marshall Street
Peterhead AB42 1BS
Tel: 01779 479345

Child Protection

Parents may choose to employ other people to educate their child, though they themselves will continue to be responsible for the education provided. They will also be responsible for ensuring that those they engage are suitable persons to have access to children. They will therefore wish to satisfy themselves by taking up appropriate references. Relevant information may also be found by requesting the potential tutor to provide a Basic Disclosure check. Basic checks reveal any unspent criminal convictions. Further information about Disclosure checks is available from Disclosure Scotland.

Contact: Disclosure Scotland
PO Box 250
Glasgow
G51 1YU
Tel: 0870 609 6006
Fax: 0870 609 6996
Website: <http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk>
E-mail: info@disclosurescotland.co.uk