

Determining suitable education for children who are 'home educated'

Guidance for parents and carers

1. Context

1.1 The best education is where children and young people will thrive, learn and grow into the best individuals they can be. Home education can be a rewarding experience for both parents and their learners, allowing opportunities and endless possibilities for life-long learning. Guidance has been co-produced with parents who have elected to home educate to assist other parents in how to share their personalised educational provision with Portsmouth City Council (PCC).

2. The law

2.1 PCC is committed to ensuring all Portsmouth's children have access to a suitable education, including recognising and supporting parent and carers who exercise their legal right to home educate their children (enshrined in Section 7 of the Act).

2.2 The Education Act 1996 requires parents / carers and local authorities to consider their legal duties for the education of children and young people. This Act requires parents / carers to ensure that their child is provided with an education that is efficient, full-time and suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude and takes into account any special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) they may have.

3. The purpose of this document

3.1 This guidance document has been co-produced to help 'fill the gap' where there is no legal definition of 'suitable' education, and to understand each other's roles.

4. Guidance

4.1 Local authorities are required by law (Education Act 1996 Section 436A) to make arrangements to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age but are not receiving a suitable education. For PCC to fulfil this responsibility, and to assist those home educating, this document serves to provide clarity regarding what it means to receive a 'suitable' education, which will also ensure PCC can fulfil its function identifying those who are not. Furthermore, it is hoped this will support parents and carers as they assist PCC in its duty.

4.2 There are a number of shared principles which underpin this guidance:

4.2.1 'Suitable' education will vary according to the age, ability, aptitude and the needs of each individual child.

4.2.2 Home education is by its nature bespoke and learner-focused, and the lens of school-based education standards is generally (for many) not helpful.

4.2.3 The parents and carers of home educated children will assist PCC with its legal responsibility by providing information about their education provision.

4.2.4 In recognition that EHE is in many ways fundamentally different (and has often arisen through challenging circumstances) from a school-based education, staff from PCC will endeavour to understand the holistic nature of each child's home education, rather than any rigid adherence to a check list.

4.2.5 The opportunities for a home educated child can go significantly beyond the experience of a school-based education. It can sometimes be challenging to define and detail the rich and varied possibilities of such an education. In this context, we have provided examples of what this *might* look like in the table below.

4.2.6 Working together and having personal, open and transparent conversations between PCC and families will foster a good working relationship in which both parents and PCC can meet their responsibilities.

5. Suitable education

5.1 Using the shared principles (outlined above), parents and PCC agree to discuss home education provision in a way that is clear and meaningful. Some things to keep in mind include:

- Being able to discuss the learning that has taken place in a coherent way.
- Attention to learning for different ages, ability, aptitude and any SEND.
- Parents / carers sharing and explaining examples of the learning and sharing supplementary evidence to support it.
- External references, sources and resources.
- Capturing learning outcomes and progress over time

5.2 To assist further, we have co-produced a table that we hope will aid parents / carers and colleagues from PCC in considering the educational provision that is in place. We hope that this table will give parents and carers a scaffold to use when sharing information about the home education in place for their child. This table is for guidance only and not intended to be prescriptive nor exhaustive.

This table outlines the key components of the law, referencing Section 7 of the Education Act 1996. A definition of each of these components has been agreed upon and some illustrative examples added of what this *might* look like in practice. We have tried to represent the wide spectrum of 'real life' individual and bespoke approaches to home education.

Focus	What this <i>may</i> look like
Efficient An efficient education achieves what it sets out to achieve.	This <i>may</i> include both short-term and long-term goals (both of which may change), for example: • Short-term goal to learn about how the body works – watched online videos or documentaries about the body; visited the library to find books about the body; visited a museum to see an exhibition about the body; took an online course about the body. • Long-term goal to become a vet – looked after pets and learnt about their needs; took part in a workshop with a pet shop or vet surgery; collected data about the different types of injuries or diseases that pets experienced; researched the different medical and physical interventions that a vet can use; found out about the academic qualifications required and began studying those subjects. • Long-term goal to rebuild confidence and resilience – took part in a mindfulness course; found tips for confidence and resilience by watching online videos; explored the negative side of social media and researched tips for how to protect themselves online; joined a weekly art group to focus on a passion and make new friends; kept a journal to record their thoughts and feelings.
Full-time A full-time education occupies a significant proportion of a learner's life.	• There is often one-to-one contact. • Education may take place outside normal 'school hours' and term time. • The type of educational activity can be varied and flexible. • Learners may engage in more self-directed activities. • The education may look different from week to week and season to season.

Suitable A suitable education enables a learner to participate fully in life in the UK.	• Learning and practising life skills, for example: visiting a shop and learning how to buy goods according to, e.g. a particular recipe, budget or dietary need; or learning to tell the time • Taking part in a range of activities with peers, for example: groups for sports, art, STEM, music, bouldering, trampolining, horse riding, playground meets, Scouting, Guiding, Girls & Boys Brigade. • Learning how to learn and meet goals, for example: engaging in a range of activities to support interests and experiences; offered opportunities to build confidence; accessing resources (online, in person, locally, at home); supported in researching future careers.
Special Educational Needs (SEND) An education that supports any SEND that a learner may have.	• A learner-focused approach will naturally support a learner with SEND, as outlined below. • SEND covers a broad range, but parents will often have a good understanding of their learner and the support they require to thrive. • The presence of SEND may mean that a learner requires a vastly different way of approaching education, including a different approach to qualifications, such as undertaking vocational courses or taking qualifications later than the age of 16.
Age An education that reflects a learner's age, their ongoing development and personal progress. Typically, younger learners will engage in a "discovery"	Discovery Phase Younger learners will often engage in discovery learning, where they participate in hands-on learning in different areas. Learners with SEND may require this approach for longer. For example:

phase, while older learners will undertake a “mastery” phase. This may happen at different times for different areas of learning.

Ability

An education that supports a learner in acquiring skills that enable them to do something.

Aptitude

An education that is tailored to the individual strengths and talents of a learner.

- Building river systems using sand and water supports an understanding of forces, the behaviour of water, erosion, influence of humans;
- Experimenting with the play equipment in the park supports an understanding of a range of concepts in physics, including sound, light, forces and the effect of gravity;
- Baking cakes supports an understanding of the size of numbers, measures, chemistry and literacy through following instructions;
- Sharing a range of books supports an understanding of a wide variety of information or the structures of stories, including plot, setting and character, plus different cultural or religious backgrounds;
- Playing digital games like Minecraft could support an understanding of using computers as tools, learning how to interact in an online space, plus lots of links to numeracy, literacy and science.

Mastery Phase

Older learners may move into mastery learning in specific areas, where they “deep dive” into a set of skills or concepts. Learners with SEND may follow very “niche” areas of focused learning, or they may prefer to focus on one or two interests at a time. For example:

- Mastering art by exploring a range of different artists or styles; visiting art exhibitions or exploring them online; experimenting with a range of different art forms themselves. This might overlap with other skills, e.g. reading about the artists, taking personal notes, planning a trip out and considering timetables and a budget.
- Mastering creating comic strips by reading a range of comics by different authors and illustrators; taking a course in comic strip illustration;

	experimenting with their own style of writing and drawing; visiting a convention or exhibition to discuss comics with other enthusiasts. • Mastering environmental management by taking a formal qualification (such as an IGCSE or vocational course); discussing ideas with peers, a tutor or a parent; conducting experiments at home and in the field; watching online videos or documentaries to learn more about the subject. • Mastering bouldering by taking part in a NICAS qualification; chatting with the instructor and other boulderers about how to improve technique; regularly visiting the bouldering centre to practise different routes and skills; keeping a bouldering log; leading a warm-up or cool-down session by giving clear instructions; researching the history of bouldering to better understand the sport. • Mastering coding by becoming part of an online community, such as Scratch; experimenting with different coding languages like Python or html; taking a course in coding; following online video tutorials about coding; developing mathematical and literacy skills to support these skills in coding.
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