



**BELFAST EDUCATION  
AND LIBRARY BOARD**

**HOME EDUCATION**

**PARENTS' AND CHILDREN'S GUIDE**

**June 2005**

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# BELFAST EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD



## HOME EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

### PARENTS' AND CHILDREN'S GUIDE

#### • INTRODUCTION

Given below are procedures and guidance on how Belfast Education and Library Board will fulfill its statutory functions with regard to children who are being educated at home.

#### • THE LEGAL SITUATION

The responsibility of parents/guardians is clearly established in Section 45 (1) & (2) of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986:

- (1) *'The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at a school or otherwise'*
- (2) *The provisions of Schedule 13 shall apply to the enforcement of the provisions of paragraph (1) and a parent who contravenes the provisions of that Schedule shall be guilty of an offence and liable to the penalties provided by paragraph 4 of that Schedule.*

#### • THE DUTY OF THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

- If you have a school-age child, you must see that he/she is educated
- You can delegate this duty to a school, or you can carry it out yourself
- In any case, the education provided must be effective and full-time
- It must be suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude
- If your child has special education needs, it must cater for them

#### • FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Belfast Education and Library Board has no statutory duty to provide financial assistance or provide tuition for home educators, though inevitably, some expense will be incurred.

However, we live in an 'information rich' society, and there is a vast amount of educational information available for free.

Regular use of a board library means you do not have to buy lots of books, and you can access information by using the Internet, at home or in the library.

You should take account of the other costs of home education, including stationery, and the costs of provision of a home study environment

Kids at school don't buy stationery? (Someone should tell Easons...)

Alternative arrangements for pupils with a statement of special educational needs are in place and parents should consult with their Statement Officer for advice on this area.

- **THE NORTHERN IRELAND CURRICULUM**

Pupils who attend schools within the board's area have a right to access the Northern Ireland Curriculum. The curriculum was made law in The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

**Note: Pupils. Not "children". N/A to non-pupils.**

The Northern Ireland Curriculum is divided into a number of key stages as follows:-

Key Stage 1	School Years 1-4
Key Stage 2	School Years 5-7
Key Stage 3	School Years 8-10
Key Stage 4	School Years 11-12

The subjects of Northern Ireland Curriculum are:-

- English
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology
- The Environment and Society
- Creative and Expressive Studies
- Language Studies.

In addition, the curriculum has a number of cross curricular educational themes:-

- Information Technology
- Education for Mutual Understanding
- Cultural Heritage
- Health Education
- Economic Awareness (Key Stages 2 and 4 only)
- Careers Education (Key Stages 2 and 4 only).

If you are educating your child at home you are not required to follow the Northern Ireland Curriculum. However, the board recommends that home educated children receive the Northern Ireland Curriculum for the following reasons:-

- i) The child will be on an equal basis as his or her school educated peers in terms of employability

When did an employer ever ask a prospective employee if he/she followed the NI Curriculum?

- ii) It provides a useful guide and if at a later date, your child returns to school, it will make re-integration into mainstream schooling that much easier

The experience of home-educators whose children have returned to school suggests that this is a non-issue, and that returners find they are ahead of their peers if anything

- iii) Public Examinations (eg GCSEs) are based on the programs of study in the Northern Ireland Curriculum

Only the NI Exam Boards. There are numerous other public (note spelling) exams available.

Ordinarily, the board cannot make available copies of the Northern Ireland Curriculum; copies can be purchased from a local HMSO Bookshop. Reference copies are also available in some libraries.

The Northern Ireland Curriculum is currently under revision and is likely to change from that described above from 2006 onwards.

- **PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS**

Should you wish to enter your child for public examinations, such as GCSE, you will need to contact an examination board direct. Contact details are provided for one examination board at the end of this document.

You may wish to maintain a relationship with a local school to facilitate the child accessing the school as an examination centre.

- **FULL TIME EDUCATION**

When deciding how much time to devote to your child's education you may find it helpful to know that the Department for Education and Skills recommends the following weekly teaching hours:

<i>21 hours for 5—7 year olds</i>
<i>23.5 hours for 8—11 year olds</i>
<i>24 hours for 12—16 year olds</i>

Pupils are required to attend school for 190 days each year.

Again, \*pupils\*. Not non-pupils, and this is misleading. HE does not require any specific number of hours of formal instruction.

- **EDUCATION FOR LIFE**

The aim of any educational programme should be to equip a young person for life. This means seeking to bring about a situation where the young person can take his or her place in society, and be economically independent.

As education is about more than imparting knowledge, parents should seek to provide a programme which enables the child develop a range of life skills:-

- *communication skills*
- *observation and awareness skills*
- *problem solving skills*
- *creative and imaginative skills*
- *numerical skills*
- *physical skills*
- *personal and social skills*

## • **THE CHILD'S VIEW**

The board encourages and welcomes the views of children and young people in accordance with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, Article 12. 1990. The board will seek the opinion of the child in relation to any proposed home education programme.

**The Board cannot insist on access to the child, but this also suggests that parents would not seek the opinion of their child, which is, of course, nonsense.**

## • **EVIDENCE OF SUITABLE EDUCATION**

The board prefers to ensure that a home educated child will receive efficient full time education by considering new cases in advance of the home education programme commencing.

**The Board can prefer what it likes; there is no legal obligation for a parent to get permission to HE from anyone. The form below is nonsense.**

Parents should complete Form HSR1 and return this to be board for consideration. The following process and time period will be followed:-

Receipt of proposed programme	Acknowledged within 5 days of receipt
Consideration of the proposed programme	Within 20 days of receipt or programme

Parents may also wish to provide evidence to the board in relation to the proposed programme in a number of ways. Parents might for example:

- write a report;
- provide samples of work;

- invite an education consultant to their home, with or without the child being present;
- meet an education consultant elsewhere, with or without the child being present;
- have the education provision endorsed by a recognised third party;
- provide evidence in any other appropriate form.

Why is this so different from the statements in the Board's HE policy document?

- **DEREGISTRATION**

If the child has never been registered at a school you should inform the board of your proposal to home-educate your child.

No legal obligation to do so.

The board prefers a child to remain at school and registered at school until such times as the home education programme has been considered and agreed by the board as being appropriate and reasonable.

No legal obligation for parent to wait for permission.

Under current Northern Ireland regulations pupils cannot be deregistered from a school for the purpose of receiving home education.

Nothing in law to say so. Statutory Rules 1974 make it clear that parents can initiate deregistration, and do not limit the circumstances for this. But even if there was nothing about dereg, to refuse to dereg is to refuse to allow HE - which is right laid down in the NI legislation.

- **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

**If the child has a statement of special educational needs made and maintained on him or her by the board, responsibility for a change of placement or provision rests with the board. You should arrange to meet with your statement officer at an early stage to discuss the circumstances of the request.**

**Responsibility for a change of placement or provision only rests with the Board if the Board is continuing to make the provision, unless (possibly) a child is registered in a special needs unit**

- **THE ROLE OF BELFAST EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD**

The board has a statutory duty to ensure that all children within its area are receiving efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at a school or otherwise.

The statutory duty is towards \*pupils\*, not children in general. The Board is only required to act wrt to a HE child "where it appears to a board that a parent of a child of compulsory school age in its area is failing to perform the duty imposed on him by article 45(1)"

The board has statutory powers to ensure that children are receiving efficient full-time education.

As a general guide, the board considers carefully all cases where children are home educated to ensure the child's rights are maintained.

**The Board \*cannot\* consider carefully all cases, since it is not aware of all cases. Since there is no obligation for parents whose children are not registered at school to inform anyone of their decision to home-educate, the Board cannot assume that it is aware of all home-educators in its area.**

- **DISPUTES BETWEEN PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND THE BOARD**

It is usually possible to resolve most disputes without entering into formal statutory procedures. However, where children of compulsory school age are not being educated at school, and the board has serious doubts about the parent/guardian's educational provision, the following scenario will apply:

- Initially, the board may make an informal request for information. If the parent/guardian provides such information and the board is satisfied that suitable education is being provided, no further steps should be taken;

Why then, does the policy talk about annual monitoring, about EWO home visits, etc?

- If, after making informal enquiries, and then giving the family reasonable time and opportunity to explain or improve on their arrangement, it still appears to the board a child is not receiving a suitable education, then the board may decide to serve a school attendance order;
- Where the board is to serve a school attendance order, parents will have the opportunity to name a school of their preference;
- If the parent/guardian does not comply with the school attendance order the board may decide to prosecute for failure to comply;
- At any stage during this process, the parent/guardian may present evidence that they are now providing a suitable education and apply to have the order revoked.

- **FURTHER BOARD INVOLVEMENT**

The board will maintain a database of pupils who are on a home education programme and will seek to monitor the programme on at least an annual basis.

The Board can only maintain a database of those children of whom it is aware, and has no legal duty or right to monitor their education on an annual basis. Nor is there any legal requirement for a formal programme of education, as is suggested here.

- **IF YOU WISH YOUR CHILD TO RETURN TO SCHOOL**

If you wish your child to return to school, you should make a direct application to any appropriate school. If your child has a statement of special educational needs, you must liaise with your statement officer in the first instance.

## USEFUL CONTACTS

### BELFAST EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

[www.belb.co.uk](http://www.belb.co.uk)

40 Academy Street  
Belfast  
BT1 2NQ

#### Home Education Officer

Mr David Ryan  
Telephone 02890 564118  
Email [david.ryan@belb.co.uk](mailto:david.ryan@belb.co.uk)

#### Educational Welfare Service

Mrs Margaret Monaghan  
Telephone 028 9056 4031  
Email [margaretmo@belb.co.uk](mailto:margaretmo@belb.co.uk)

### CCEA

<http://www.ccea.org>

The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) was established on 1 April 1994 and is a non-departmental public body reporting to the Department of Education in Northern Ireland.

CCEA places itself at the heart of the Northern Ireland community ensuring its products and services meet the needs of all learners.

CCEA  
29 Clarendon Road  
Clarendon Dock  
Belfast BT1 3BG  
Telephone: (028) 9026 1200  
Fax: (028) 9026 1234  
E-mail: [info@ccea.org.uk](mailto:info@ccea.org.uk)

## CHILDREN'S LAW CENTRE

[www.childrenslawcentre.org](http://www.childrenslawcentre.org)

- compliments existing services provided by the voluntary, community, statutory and legal sector
- works in partnership with children and other agencies committed to releasing children's rights
- is developing a comprehensive and accessible advice service on children's rights and the law as it relates to children and young people

3rd Floor  
Philip House  
123-137 York Street  
BELFAST  
BT15 1AB  
Northern Ireland

Telephone 028 90 245704  
Email [info@childrenslawcentre.org](mailto:info@childrenslawcentre.org)

## EDUCATION OTHERWISE

[www.education-otherwise.org](http://www.education-otherwise.org)

**Education Otherwise** is a UK-based membership organisation which provides support and information for families whose children are being educated outside school, and for those who wish to uphold the freedom of families to take proper responsibility for the education of their children

Education Otherwise Association Ltd	Northern Ireland Contact
212 Gordon Avenue	Shevaun Rafferty
Camberley	5A Greenmount Park
Surrey	Coleraine
GU15 2NT	BT51 3QL

Telephone 01276 22735  
Email [info@education-otherwise.org](mailto:info@education-otherwise.org)

Telephone 02870 344006  
Email [tsrafferty@btinternet.com](mailto:tsrafferty@btinternet.com)

## **HMSO**

<http://www.hmso.gov.uk/>

HMSO delivers a wide range of services to the public, information industry and government relating to access and re-use of government information.

Enquiries  
HMSO  
St Clements House  
2-16 Colegate  
Norwich  
NR3 1BQ

## **NORTHERN IRELAND CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER**

[www.niccy.org](http://www.niccy.org)

A number of other countries have had Children's Commissioners (sometimes called an Ombudsman for Children) for some years. In Northern Ireland after many years of campaigning and discussion, legislation setting up the office of the Commissioner was passed on the 27th February 2003.

NICCY  
Millennium House  
17-25 Great Victoria Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7BN

Telephone (028) 9031 1616

Email [info@niccy.org](mailto:info@niccy.org)