

A GUIDE TO EDUCATION AT HOME

The education of a child at home is a great responsibility for a family. It demands a serious commitment of time, money, patience and energy. If you are considering educating your child at home as opposed to in a school, the following questions and answers will hopefully clarify the situation and help you in making your decision. They also outline the way in which Worcestershire Local Education Authority (LEA) carries out its duties under the 1996 Education Act.

Does my child have to go to school?

The 1996 Education Act states that *'it is the duty of parents to secure an appropriate full time education for their children of compulsory school age:* Most parents carry out this duty by ensuring their child attends school. However, for a variety of reasons, a small minority of parents decide to take on the duty to educate their child/children themselves, that is to 'educate at home'.

What are the parents' /carers' responsibilities?

Under section 7 of the 1996 Act, parents of every child of compulsory school age: *'shall cause the child to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise:*

What is compulsory school age?

The law requires a child to be educated from the start of the school term following their fifth birthday until the last Friday in June in the school year in which a child reaches sixteen.

Who do I inform if I decide to educate my child at home?

You should inform the Headteacher of your child's school and he/she will inform the LEA.

What is the LEA's duty under the 1996 Education Act?

The Act places the obligation on LEAs to ensure that home educators are providing an efficient education for their children, which takes into account age, ability, aptitude and any special needs that the child may have. Worcestershire normally undertakes this task by making visits at times that are mutually agreed. These visits will usually take place during term time and during the working day.

How can I teach my child if I am not a trained teacher?

You do not need to have formal qualifications, or be a teacher, to educate your child at home. Qualities such as patience, enthusiasm and flexibility are invaluable. You do not need to 'know everything'. An important skill, as well as developing a sound knowledge base, is for all concerned to learn how to learn and think, and how to find out information.

What will I be expected to teach and how should I teach it?

Some parents may decide to teach their child themselves, or to make arrangements to plan and teach in small groups with other local families who are involved in education at home. Alternatively the family may elect to pay for a private tutor. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that any tutors/teachers are suitably qualified and experienced to teach your child. Irrespective of who actually teaches the child, it will be up to the parent to demonstrate to the LEA that the programme of work is helping him/her to learn and that the child is developing according to her/his age, ability, aptitude and any special needs.

Some home educators have a timetable showing the normal planned activities over a period of time such as you would find in a school. Other parents choose to follow a form of 'discovery' education where the interests of the child are followed. Others use a mixture of these methods. The LEA's interest is in establishing that a suitable education is taking place, rather than endorsing any particular method.

