

Why Some Parents Home Educate Straw Poll



Members of a FB forum with over 600 individuals, open to all home educators in the UK, were asked how long they had home educated and what their three main reasons were for home educating, either at the beginning, now or both. I received 39 replies (approximately 6.5% of the membership). All replies are included.

I conducted a more intensive piece of research into home education in around 2005 asking a very similar question. This was published in my first book 'Elective, Home Based Education I'. In my original research in 2005 the principle reasons were initially bullying and flexibility in the longer term. Encouragingly, bullying doesn't seem to feature very greatly here but Freedom, or flexibility remains a significant factor.

This should not be regarded as a definitive study on the subject as it is a self-selecting sample, but it might offer an insight to some of the thinking behind home education in the UK. However, from my personal experience it appears to be broadly representative.

As the replies were via a Facebook forum they were often in abbreviated note form, so I've made simple grammatical changes to make the comments more readable. I have also removed identifying remarks and names to protect the identity of the authors and their children.

1. Its right for our family
2. My son is thriving.
3. We know it works.

'Officially' home educating for a year, however the decision was made long before compulsory age and his dad was home educated too

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- 1) Mine & husband own schooling experience was bad
- 2) Children can learn what they want
- 3) Not stuck in a classroom

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I'm not home educating yet (currently a dissatisfied primary school teacher at my boys' school)! But if I was -and I seriously continue to consider it on an almost daily basis- these would be them:-

Because I get so very cross at the education system at present, where children are little more than statistics

To gain more freedom with what is learnt and to really be inspired by what my kids are interested in

To avoid the huge amount of wasted time and bureaucracy in schools.

The reasons I don't yet, are because my children are happy and learning. As soon as either of these change, I know what I'll do!

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HE for 10 yrs.

1. Initially because the awesome Head Teacher at the school my older kids were at left and the replacement HT was a chocolate teapot and no other school compared.

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2. The younger ones never went to school as it was obvious how well the older kids were doing given the freedom to follow their passions.

3. My older kids have seen the effect of peer pressure/school on their school educated friends and are very glad not to be in the same situation and I am happy that they are happy with their decision.

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Learning together as a family, for my children to be free and feel free to explore and enjoy learning in the ways that they learn best, for the Freedom to learn about themselves their strengths and weaknesses and to build their confidence and character.

I have been home educating for 2yrs.

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We started because:

1) My eldest had never settled into the school environment (he was 8 at the time)

2) I had a deep unease about all the pressure and box-ticking in schools rather than education

3) I completely 'got' how home ed would work within 30 minutes of discovering its existence. That was over 12 years ago. I would now say that our main reasons are:

1) Still opposed to the whole box-ticking emphasis

2) We love that our education is completely personal and stress free

3) My whole paradigm has changed and HE has now become the norm for us - I look at schools and wonder why?!

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1) Lack of support within school

2) Cutting out the middle man

3) To ensure my children know that being "different" is the "norm"

Home ed for nearly a year

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1. A better tailored one-on-one education for my son, who responds very well to one-on-one.

2. More time as a family, and a more convenient lifestyle.

3. A bigger opportunity to avoid what I perceive to be negative or detrimental influences and/or a hugely flawed and failing education system.

We've been HE for 6 months.

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Want the freedom from the restrictive national curriculum

Want time to do things as a family without everywhere being packed

Believe it's the best option for our daughter

Home edding 10 years as had decided before child born we would

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Officially been doing it for 2 weeks. Been thinking of it for 8 months.

1. All three of our girls (age 6, 4 and 10 months) are happy. They are all benefiting from the stress free days we have with no homework and school runs.

2. They learn what they're interested in and what is relevant in this world, rather than what Ofsted say they should learn.

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3. They get the childhood they deserve rather than being cooped up in a classroom doing silly tests etc.

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Initially because the children didn't like it - became unwell and failed to thrive.

Secondly we had deep misgivings about such a prescriptive system of schooling kids without personal respect and choice.

We continued because we saw what a brilliant way to raise and educate it was. They never went back to school.

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We've been home educating for 10 years, if you're counting from birth (!) or about 6 1/2 years since we made the decision not to send the kids to school. Main reasons:

1. Freedom to learn at own pace, in own way

2. Time together as a family

3. Individuality, freedom to think and act for ourselves. There's everything wrong with our schooling system and societal attitudes to education, learning, parenting, children.

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My boys are still little, 3.5 and almost 2 so not classed as school aged though I feel we collectively, as parents, home educate from the days our children are born.

1. We want our children to follow their dreams. More background, a lot of my friends growing up were home educated, I was in school. Of my HE friends and schooled friends those who followed their hearts path are mainly, not exclusively, my HE friends. They all do things as adults which they love which is in stark contrast to most of my school friends.

2. An extension of above. I want my children to be happy as adults and following your dreams really helps with this!

3. It's simply the right choice for our family

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Been home educating my 8 year old 3 months - he is diagnosed with asd, dyslexia, dyslexia, hypermobility and anxiety disorder. Sending him to school has always been like forcing a square peg into a round hole on every level and left him with zero confidence, having major meltdown most days and depressed to the point of attempting to hang himself. I wish I had known it was perfectly legal to not send him a long time ago. We have been deschooling and I have put no pressure/expectations on him to learn 'in the conventional sense' and already I have a little boy who smiles, giggles and doesn't meltdown on a daily basis (only had two in 3 months!); he also doesn't tell me he would rather be dead anymore either. . My daughter joined us in home ed a week ago (aged 14) as she has suffered bullying and due to bad behaviour of others in class felt she wasn't progressing; however she wants to sit exams and go to university so has researched and organised to sit 3 gcse's next year and plans to take a further 3-5 in 2016.

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1 freedom of choice and bloody minded to know i can do better

2 don't trust the education system

3 don't want my children associating with poorly behaved children

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Haven't started HE yet, dd finishes primary in 2 weeks, and will be HE from then. Reasons:

1. I want dd to be able to follow her own interests without being tested, compared, under pressure, under Gove, and to come out of her teens confident without her love of learning and creativity sucked out of her. (ok you could probably make that into 3 separate reasons!)
2. I want dd to be out of the pressured social climate in schools, to be free to have friendships that she really wants and feels good about, and to spend time with all ages and types of people, not shut in a classroom with a bunch her own age with one adult authority to each classroom.
3. I want the chance to continue to have a close, communicative relationship that doesn't consist of nagging to do h/w or having the ever-present authority of school over us, telling me how she's doing academically and what she should be doing next.

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Been at it for 13 years now. Only for one reason: we couldn't find a school that could meet the needs of a bright child with SEND.

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I've been HE since September last year so around 9 months now. Three reasons for it –

1. Young son was spending more time being excluded from school than attending due to his ASD / ADHD and school staff simply not knowing how to deal with it.
2. My son has never been happier - the day he knew he didn't have to go back he went from uptight, anxious and tense to relaxed, relieved and hasn't looked back.
3. The system is not set up to treat children as individuals and I don't think it encourages independent thought. I was speaking to my little sister who is 16 a few months ago about her school work and for her project she wasn't allowed to go and research the subject (I forget what it was) but was to stick to the information that was handed out for revision. I couldn't comprehend why on

earth it would not be allowed to seek out more or alternative information to what was given and instead to just work from exactly the same thing as everyone else. Bizarre!

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1. Schools and education seem to have forgotten about the child and what is important.
2. My son is happier. He is not told off, confused and left in another room alone he doesn't have to miss break or sit still or spend all day on a carpet conforming to be a Clarks pair of shoes.
3. There are no time restraints.

he is 7, we have been out a year

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15 years. Only 3? My children have never been to school.

- 1 I met home educated children who had never been to school and they were considerate, thoughtful, interesting, interested, kind etc and I wanted my children to be like that
- 2 wanted my children not to lose their natural love of and ability to learn
- 3 wanted not to have the stress I would inevitably have with daily battles with arbitrary school rules and a school full of people that thought they knew my child better than me

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Schools can't cater for certain medical conditions

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Seven years, never been to school. As for reasons:

1. Successive governments have trashed the school system and made it not fit for purpose.
2. Freedom to do what we want without having to fit a school timetable.
3. Ability to move between countries and maintain continuity.

We did nine months in the US a few years back, and as some may know, we're back in the US at the moment. No changing of school or school system needed, no worrying about fitting in with term or test dates either.

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3yrs with eldest. Tried two schools and neither dealt with bullying, he was suicidal and schools were just too stressful for our family.

Same reasons for my other son except he wasn't suicidal, but was left to drown in work he couldn't do. I still have a daughter at school who hasn't yet had any of the problems the boys had and even gets support with her school work but she will be home ed through secondary

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9 months DD age 9.

- 1) Freedom from school run, time constraints etc. (less frazzled, peace reigns),
- 2) Education more suited for my dyslexic child, linked to freeing her from feelings of failure, casual bullying etc.
- 3) I won't be told that taking my child out of school is not educational and be at risk of fines for doing so. So far we've been all over UK, Greece, Turkey, Italy. She has learnt history, geography, general knowledge, how to read a timetable, how to tell the time, (maths) etc. ☺ in summary, 1 reason boiling down to freedom.

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10 months child anxieties, horrible senco and a stressed out mum!

Now little anxiety, no meeting with a horrible senco and a rather happy mummy!

Best decision ever to home -ed!

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Child age 15, this is week 4

1. Daughter attempted suicide twice due to pressure at school
2. Constant bullying for anything
3. Pressure of GCSE in year 10

Still happy best decision made

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I started HE because neither of my kids could settle in school age 4, I continued because they were happier and getting a better education. My kids are now 21 and 16. They both spent time in school and time out.

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1. Oldest child dying educationally in school, triggered to breaking point by a series of dreadful incidences with an awful teacher - summarises as bad school environment I guess.
 2. Having lived overseas in various other countries, I knew that the UK system was poor by comparison - I knew there was better and that I could deliver it.
 3. I like spending time with my children!
- Been HEing now for 5 years 3 months.

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3 years
Happiness.
Freedom
Control

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I just want to say that the things some of you have said about the weight lifted from your children's shoulders when they realised they didn't have to go to school any more sounds exactly like my experience when I quit a job I was hating - the difference being, nobody bats an eyelid at an adult deciding to leave a job, but there's all sorts of fuss about a child leaving school - when will society understand that children have feelings and are individuals just as much as adults???

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When I initially wanted to HE:

1. I knew it would be right for my son.
2. My appalling experience at school.
3. Everyone else's appalling experience at school

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Now: 9 years on, the lad never having been in school:

1. I know it is right for my son.
2. It is such a comfortable life with so much pleasure for us both.
3. School is just a policing exercise now with bars & gates & security, I don't want my son growing up in that environment.

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Time with my child,
Enabling my child's interests,
Freedom.

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Started home educating my daughter last year we made a huge list for and against before we went ahead these are the top 3

1. Happiness.
2. More focused
3. A daughter who is excelling and taking responsibility.

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We've been home educating for 11 years - reason for starting:

- 1 L wasn't happy at nursery
- 2 seeing just how easily and thoughtlessly "teachers" could switch off an interested engaged child without even noticing, and

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3 - just how little they cared about switching off his interest, because he was behaving and not causing trouble.

Reasons now:

- 1, none of the children are "school shaped", the ways they lean best just wouldn't work in school,
- 2 because it's working!
- 3 because when you look at it critically the whole idea of school is preposterous and so flawed.

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Our 6 year old boy, a year and 4 months.

- 1) "self-directed and working on his own agenda" hence not suitable for mainstream school
- 2) More done in less time, freedom to do and enjoy more
- 3) Happy familyand we are sending this comment from sunny Ibiza

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I've been HE for almost a year daughter has a medical condition and was tormented over it. She is now smiling and not stressing on school days

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Well, first off, both research like Better Late than Early plus my own intuition convinced me that 4 years old was too early to send my eldest to school;

- 2 then there's the spiritual issue where I didn't want to confess God's omnipresence on Sunday, and have nothing mentioned about him throughout the weekdays;
- 3, I'm tempted to mention saving money on holidays because we just returned from the US after saving 60% on tix by going in May and not July, but instead, I think it would have to be the high quality relationships, both amongst the family members and with the learning topics themselves.

I have 4 kids

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25 years approx, kids now 28 and 18.

1. Couldn't ever have got organised enough to get to school on time each day
2. Never liked any form of compulsion for any age group
3. Eldest was learning really well at home before he was 5, didn't see a need to change that.