

Response by Bedfordshire County Council to Consultation Draft Guidelines for Local Education Authorities on Elective Home Education issued by the DfES in February 2005.

Summary

While welcoming the draft guidance on EHE which has been requested over many years there are some basic issues which are not addressed. These issues include **the right of access to a child and the responsibility of parents/carers to provide a minimum basic education.**

In view of recent legislation on **safeguarding children** and the drive to **improve standards** in education for all children it would seem that the draft guidance does not take account of these areas to enable LEAs to implement the recommendations and targets in these other policies.

In particular the draft document does not focus clearly enough on responsibilities and support in areas where disability is concerned and statements of special educational need have been issued.

Other vulnerable groups such as Travellers are also not given any further assistance within the terms of this draft document.

Further funding from the Department would be necessary to support some suggestions in the document unless current LEA funding is to be diverted into this area.

In detail

Parti

1.1 Clarity on funding for parents/carers is needed and to state that the LEA has no responsibility for the educational provision.

1.4 Since bullying is given clearly as an issue by parents over the years it should be inserted in this list.

Part 2

2.3 and 2.4 The duty to inform the LEA is needed especially when a child may never have been on a school roll.

2.9 Again the necessity of informing the LEA is apparent if this is to have any meaning.

Part 3

3.1 What standards are involved since there are none laid down?

3.3 Funding for training in the law and home-education training is assumed.

3.9 Clarification on the terms is needed; i.e. reasonable timescale, efficient.

3.10 How can any assumption be made without any investigation?

Continued;

Part 3

3.12 Some clearer guidance on what an acceptable philosophy might be is necessary.

3.13 Is there no need for any measure to be made on fulltime?

- 3.15 Access is needed.
- 3.16 The evidence of a written report only is insufficient to meet this.
- 3.17 This seems to contradict the need to safeguard children.
- 3.18 An opportunity to specify that a national annual review should be made is missed here.
- 3.25 Responsibilities on calling of reviews of statements needs to be clarified.
- 3.26 Medical needs issues and non-educational support by the LEA is not clear.

Part 4

- 4.3 No minimum standards?
- 4.7 Access is an issue. Child Protection issues of neglect and abuse could slip through.
- 4.12 Reasonable cause gives cause for concern since it is not explained.
- 4.13 LEAs will all need to conform to this use of funding.

PartS

- 5.2 Funding implications without any additional funding being available.
- 5.6 Is this always short-term and what constitutes attendance? Who is responsible for inspecting the curriculum provision of each child? What if there is a group of children using this arrangement with the school's agreement as elective home education?
- 5.8 Clarification on work experience is needed in relation to responsibilities for health and safety checks and the costs involved.
- 5.13 The fact that a Traveller family does not have a legal place to stay should not be used by professionals to encourage parents to opt for home education as a solution to the difficulties in accessing highly mobile children to school places and the educational provision which is the legal entitlement of all children regardless of the status of their accommodation. Most Traveller Education Services undertake outreach work. When highly mobile groups move into an area most TEs will make contact with the group and offer to support access to school places and make contact with previous school/services to maintain continuity of experience. For most Services these children, being the most vulnerable in society, are the greatest priority.

Continued;

PartS

- 5.14 Care should be taken to insure that the communities' culture is preserved and not interfered with, but it is difficult to see how parents who are not literate themselves and do not use/employ others to insure that their children acquire literacy and numeracy can be said to be providing them with an education that equips them for life.

Useful Contacts

It would be useful in a multicultural society to have nonChristian contacts also in this section.

Should issues such as free school meals be addressed?

Comments on the value added aspects of EHE and contacts for gifted and talented would be useful.

This response to the draft guidance on Elective Home Education has been compiled with the assistance of contributions from the Traveller Education Service, the Education Welfare Service and the Assessment and Monitoring Team within Bedfordshire County Council.

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