Ministry of Education
Cayman Islands Government

National Home Schooling Policy	
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Cross References:

This policy should be cross-referenced with the following:

Education Act, 2016

Education Regulations, 2017

Children Act (2012 Revision)

Immigration (Transition) Act (2021 Revision)

The Registration, Admission, Readmission and Transfer of students in schools policy 2017

ECCE policy on Reception age students 2013

The Cayman Islands' Code of Practice, 2021

Attendance standards for compulsory age children in schools 2017

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Introduction

The Ministry of Education and Department of Education Services, support a parent's/guardian's right to choose an educational environment that suits their child(ren's) needs. Some parents choose to educate their children at home for a variety of reasons. To balance a parent's right to educate their child and the Government's (Education Act 2016) duty to ensure that all children are appropriately educated, parents/guardians, as part of their responsibility, need to apply for and be granted approval to home school their child.

Aims:

This policy aims to:

- Ensure that all children receive a world class education regardless of background and whether education is provided at school or at home

- Establish the standard conditions for registering a child of compulsory school age for home schooling
- Establish the procedures and responsibilities related to home schooling

Policy Overview

By law, all children aged between 5 and 17 years are required to be in full-time education. The Ministry of Education, through the Department of Education Services, will grant permission to parents to educate their children at home, provided they apply in advance and meet the required conditions:

- Prove that the child is legal and normally resident in the Cayman Islands
- Prove that the child is of compulsory school age or in the compulsory stage of education

In applying for a child to be registered for home schooling parents and/or guardians must indicate that they intend to comply with the standard conditions of registration as described in this policy.

The main standard conditions parents undertake to meet include:

- The provision of quality education for their child; and the provision of an annual written report on the child's educational progress (required in the tenth month of the registration year).
- Compliance with annual reporting requirements as may be set in the current guidelines for home schooling
- Complete the required registration process which includes providing written documentation that establishes the curriculum or learning strategy that will be delivered ensuring that children learn the mandatory subjects established in the Education Act, 2016.

A child is granted approval for registration in a timely manner once the parent has satisfactorily provided all required information as stated on the application form and the Director of the Department of Education Services (or designee) is satisfied the conditions of registration have been met.

When choosing this form of education, the parent/guardian accepts both the educational and financial responsibility of educating their child at home using an educational programme or learning philosophy developed or adapted by them or by a curriculum publisher in a home setting.

Safeguarding

It is recognised that children who are being home schooled are subject to less monitoring and scrutiny than children who attend school and, as a result, are less likely to come to the attention of mandated reporters if they are being abused or neglected. To address this, the Department of Education Services will ensure that safeguarding checks are carried out when home visits are conducted. This will generally include one of the Truancy Officers together with the DES Child Protection/Designated Safeguarding Liaison. Additionally, when applications for home schooling are received for vulnerable children, the DES's Child Protection/Designated Safeguarding Liaison will share relevant information with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and/or the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), as appropriate, particularly for children:

- On Care Orders
- On Case Plans
- Who have been the subject of MASH referrals
- Who are pregnant

Where there is a concern for the safety or welfare of a child, the DES Child Protection/Designated Safeguarding Liaison will liaise with relevant agencies and make any appropriate referrals.

Responsibilities

Ministry of Education will:

- Ensure that Ministry staff and other relevant stakeholders are aware of this policy, related guidance documents and procedures

Office of Educational Standards (OES) will:

- Assess the home school programme to ensure that it meets the requirements
- Evaluate and confirm that the home schooled child makes progress and meets expected standards of achievement

Department of Education Services will:

- Facilitate public access to the registration process.

- Assist parents/guardians in complying with established procedures should they wish to register their child for home schooling and oversee the home schooling registration process by:
  - Processing registration applications and notifying parents/guardians of the decision in a timely manner
  - Conducting annual visits to support the safeguarding of the home schooled child
  - Issuing registration certificates and letters
  - Monitor parents'/guardians' compliance with standard conditions of registration, which may include home visits to verify attendance, addresses and compliance with the Education Act, 2016 and Regulations, 2017 governing home schooling
  - Reporting to the Director of the Department of Education Services issues and any area of noncompliance on the part of the registered home-school
  - Process reports on educational performance and proposed outcomes
- Provide necessary documentation, forms and website updates to support the home schooling registration system
- Maintain a database of registered children and home schoolers
- Receive annual reports from the registered home-schools
- Receive and process applications for home school withdrawals.
- Action within the law in any situation where it can be proven that a child is not receiving a suitable education

Parents/Guardians will:

- Meet their compulsory schooling obligation by registering their child for home schooling via the Department of Education Services
- Provide supporting documentation as outlined on the home schooling application, including evidence of the educational programme or learning philosophy to be used.
- Comply with the Education Act, 2016 and Regulations, 2017, and standard conditions of registration by providing their child with a quality education which is detailed in the child's education programme and demonstrated in the annual report, which must be provided in the tenth month of each registration year
- Complete and forward to the Department of Education Services the application for withdrawal immediately following cessation of the home-school programme. This application must be supported by evidence of enrolment in a local or international educational institution, or leaving the jurisdiction.

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Supporting Documentation

Forms

- Application for Registration – Home schooling Education Programme https://schools.edu.ky/Pages/Home.aspx.
- Application for withdrawal of a Home schooling Programme

Guidelines

- Home schooling guidance for parents

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Terminology

Home schooling means education for a child of compulsory school age delivered in a home setting.

Compulsory education means a course of study whether conducted in a school or otherwise that is designed to meet the specified learning needs of an individual or group of persons of compulsory school age.

Compulsory school age means age commencing on the date next following that upon which a child attains the age of five years before 1st September and ending on the date on which the child attains the age of seventeen years, or has met the requirements to obtain a secondary school diploma or its equivalent, whichever is earlier, or such other age bracket as may be specified by an Order made under section 11;

Fulltime education means a minimum of five hours of curriculum instruction per day, excluding lunch and break times, for a total of at least one hundred and eighty-five days per year, or the equivalent hours per year (925) or any other duration of greater length as may be specified in regulations;

Vulnerable children refers to children who are at greater risk of experiencing physical or emotional harm and/or experiencing poor outcomes because of one or more factors in their lives.