Homeschooling in the Cayman Islands

Parental Guidance

Next Review - December 2024

Introduction

Quality education is essential to an individual's ability to contribute to a democratic society. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) recognizes that ALL children have the right to education on the basis of equal opportunity. Further to this, parents[1] may choose to educate their child at home if they believe that provision is more in-line with their child receiving a world-class education.

Deciding to home school your child is your right, but not a step that should be taken lightly. It requires parents to think about the curriculum they will provide and whether or not it will allow their child/children to reach their full potential socially and academically.

What is home schooling?

Home schooling refers to a choice by parents/guardians to provide full time education for a child of compulsory school age in a home setting.

As a parent you may choose to employ a private tutor or other adults to help with fulfilling the requirements of the Home Schooling Policy. It is recommended that parents vet these individuals to ensure they comply with the basic standard for safeguarding children.

In some cases, parents choose to make arrangements with tutoring centres or education institutions to provide part of their child's education. However, if a parent has chosen to register their child for home schooling, the child is to receive the *majority* of their full-time education in a home setting.

Parental Considerations

It is your legal right to homeschool your child. However, as such, parents are then accepting sole responsibility for their child's academic progress and achievement, and releasing the Ministry of Education and Department of Education Services from any liability with regard to these matters. Parents are encouraged to consider the following:

- Why you are thinking of educating your child at home?
- What does your child think of the idea of homeschooling?
- Do you have the time, resources and ability to teach your child?
- Are you comfortable with the chosen curriculum and confident that it will support your child's learning?
- How will you assess progress and attainment?
- Is your home suitable for undertaking teaching and learning in terms of noise, space and is the general environment conducive to learning?
- Can you provide adequate social experiences and physical exercise to help your child develop?
- Is this temporary? What are your long-term intentions?

[1] Reference to 'parents' in this document refers to all persons having parental responsibility, including guardians and caregivers.

- Does your child have an additional or special learning need? Are you able to support this at home?

Parental Duties and Legal Requirements

Section 12 of the Education Act 2016 provides that:

> *Subject to subsection (3), a parent or legal guardian of any child of compulsory school age shall ensure that the child receives full-time education suitable to the child's requirements either by attendance at school, from the first day of the school calendar, or otherwise as provided in section 16*

Section 16 states

> *16. (1) The Director of the Department of Education Services may, upon the application of a parent or legal guardian of a child, authorize a child of compulsory school age to be educated at the place where the child is normally resident or at the home of another person approved by the parent or legal guardian if the parent complies with this section and the programme meets the goals and objectives outlined in Part 5 of the application form.*

A child becomes compulsory school age when she or he turns five before the first of September of that academic year. The child remains of compulsory school age until the day in which the child turns seventeen or completes the requirements to obtain a secondary diploma or its equivalent.

As a parent homeschooling, you are responsible for ensuring that your child receives a full-time education covering the mandated subjects, as well as you are required to register your child for homeschooling annually (Education Act 2016 – Section 16). If at any stage, it becomes clear that as parents you cannot provide a full-time education, you should let the Department of Education Services know as soon as possible so as not to be in breach of the law and full-time provision.

Full-time education is defined in the law as a minimum of five hours of curriculum instruction and learning per day, excluding breaks, for a total of at least 185 days per year or the equivalent in hours (925 hours). It is further understood that home schooling may sometimes take place outside of normal school hours.

Though there are no legal requirements to follow the National Curriculum, there are mandatory subjects that must be included in the homeschool curriculum. These are, literacy, numeracy, science, ICT, the arts, physical education and studies related to civics, religion and the history and culture of the Cayman Islands (Education Act 2016 – Section 17).

Parents shall maintain records of attendance that should be available to the Director of Education Services or designate upon request. Additionally, parents shall maintain data to inform the annual report, required to be submitted to the department as evidence of the achievement and progress over the year.

If parents fail to evidence that their child is making satisfactory progress the Minister can terminate the homeschool program and instruct the Director of Education Services to direct the child to attend an established school. (Education Act 2016 – Section 16)

Safeguarding

The Ministry of Education has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This also applies to children being educated at home as well as in school. A home visit is conducted as part of the registration process and annually as part of the re-registration or progress visits. Where there is a concern for the safety or welfare of a child, the *Child Protection/Designated Safeguarding Liaison* from the Department of Education Services will liaise with the relevant agency and make the necessary referrals.

In the event that a child, who is placed on a care order or case plan is registered for homeschooling, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Multi Agency Support Hub (MASH) will be informed of the parents' plans to remove the child from the educational institutions.

Parents may choose to employ others to educate their child at home, though they themselves are still responsible for the education provided. In these circumstances, parents should ensure that those whom they engage are suitable to have access to children. It is strongly recommended that parents arrange for relevant criminal background checks prior to employment and that there are arrangements made for ongoing supervision. These checks are important to safeguard the child's physical and emotional wellbeing.

The Ministry of Education's Child Protection and Safeguarding in Education document has a section on Screening and Selection, providing information and guidance on backgrounds checks, interviewing and reference checking, which parents are encouraged to utilise.

If children are going online to receive education, it is important for parents to be aware of online safety. (See attachment 2 NSPCC *Online safety: top tips document).*

Oversight

The relevant staff at the Department of Education services may conduct site visits, once arranged and if needed, additional unarranged visits to ensure that the home school setting is conducive to learning and that the child is making progress through the agreed curriculum.

The Office of Education Standards can assess and monitor the provision of homeschooling and if found to not meet the requirements, make recommendations that the child should return to school (Education Act, 2016 Section 16.)

Approval Standards Checklist

- Completed registration form. Registration opens on July 1st and should be completed by July 31st. **https://schools.edu.ky/Pages/SchoolRegistration.aspx**
- Proof of relationship to student – Birth or adoption or Court Order)
- Evidence of homeschool curriculum, resources and assessment programme that fulfills the standard required by law.
- Timetable/proof of meeting required teaching days/hours.
- Student's most recent report card
- Annual report template which will be submitted in at least the tenth month
- Proof of Immigration Status:
    - Proof of being Caymanian
    - Permanent Residency Letter/Certificate
    - Civil Servant Contract noting child as a dependent.
    - Work permit noting child as a dependent
    - Other supporting documents may be considered.
- Photo identification for each parent
- Special Educational Students- Assessments and Learning Support Plan

For additional information please contact the Department of Education Services:

Mrs. Nicki Samuels

Senior Customer Service Officer

nicki.samuels@gov.ky Tel: 244-1831

Website: www.schools.edu.ky

Appendix 1

Pre-Approved Home school Curriculum/Programmes

List of Programmes that have been used/are being used by other homeschoolers:

- ABA
- Abeka Home School
- ACE
- Apologia
- Blyth Academy
- Bridgeway Academy
- Calvert Homeschool
- Florida Virtual School
- Griggs International Academy
- Inter High (UK online)
- Keystone High School (Online)
- k12 International Academy
- K12 Online Private School
- Laurel Springs School, California
- Liberty University Online Academy
- Lighthouse Christian Academy
- New Gate Montessori IB School -
- Wolsey Hall Oxford - O Levels
- Oak Meadow
- Oxford Learning - A-Levels
- Park City Independent Online School
- Penn Foster High School
- Schoolsparks curriculum
- Sonlight Homeschool Curriculum
- Sycamore Academy
- Teaching Textbooks
- Time4Learning
- WriteAHome
- Alpha Omega Switched on Schoolhouse Curriculum
- World education curriculum (UK)

*The above list is not exhaustive.

Appendix 2

Online safety: top tips

Going online is a huge part of most young people's lives so it's important to talk to them about online safety. Here's our tips to get you started.



Chat to them about what they like to do online

The best way to find out what your child is doing online is to talk to them and have regular conversations so that online safety is part of everyday discussion. Ask them open-ended questions like 'What's your favourite game or app to play on?'.

- Listen to what they have to say and show an interest. They could give you a demo of their favourite app or show you their favourite YouTube or TikTok account.
- They will probably be able to teach you things you don't know! This will also give you an opportunity to chat about any safety settings they might already have in place.
- Regular conversations with your child will encourage them to come to you if they ever need support or advice.

Talk about who they are in contact with online

There are lots of different ways that children can talk to people online – messaging apps, on social media, and less obvious ways such as chat on online games. Talk to your child about who they are talking to and what they are sharing with them.

- Use settings to help limit who can contact your child.
- Remind your child that they shouldn't share personal information with people they don't know online.
- Let your child know they can come to you or another trusted adult if any conversation makes them feel uncomfortable.

Help manage what they see and do online

Make sure to talk to your child first before implementing any new settings and explain to them how they help to keep them safe.

Parental controls and privacy settings can help you manage how your child spends time online and help to keep them safe.

- Device settings – manage things like location sharing, screen time and in-app purchases. Most tech and gaming companies have dedicated pages to support with setting these up.
- App or game settings – in-app tools that can help to keep your child's account private and manage who they're talking to. You can normally find information on these in account settings or directly on the platforms website.
- Mobile or network provider settings – help to manage browsing access and stop your child from visiting inappropriate sites or downloading apps that aren't suitable. Contact your mobile or broadband provider for more information about setting this up.

Remember it's ok to ask for help!

Remember you don't have to be an online safety expert – that's our job! We're here to help, with resources and advice to help support you and your child.

If your child asks you a question you don't know the answer to, or speaks to you about a negative experience they had online, here are some of things you could do:

- Visit the NSPCC online safety hub: **nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety**
- Call the NSPCC helpline **0808 800 5000** to speak to an advisor
- Ask another parent
- Speak to your child's teacher
- If your child needs more support, they can contact Childline: **childline.org.uk**



NSPCC

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

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