

# HOME EDUCATION DURING THE PANDEMIC



## Reaching Families

### Introduction

We are calling this fact sheet Home Education rather than Home Schooling as this is a unique and temporary situation which is very different to Elective Home Schooling.

Different schools may be offering different advice and support to parents, but the important thing is that you find a way that works for you and your children and that you can balance some learning activities with the health and well-being of all the family, including yourself.

This is what the DfE says:

*"While staying at home due to coronavirus, parents and carers may be worried about their children's development and the effect of missing school or nursery. No one expects parents to act as teachers, or to provide the activities and feedback that a school or nursery would. Parents and carers should do their best to help children and support their learning while dealing with other demands."*

### What works best for you?

Put plans in place to get you all through this as stress free as humanly possible. You may have plenty of space or it may be very difficult to find a place for your children to get on with their school work, especially if you have several of different ages. You may consider 'shifts', taking turns to use the table (or other spaces) for example. Older children may prefer to work in their rooms and then show you what they have done. You may be able to do some activities like Art and PE together as a family.

### The school day

Children and young people may usually be at school from 9 to 3 at least, but they are not working for all this time. If you take off time for breaks and movement between lessons, there may not be more than three or four focused working hours a day. And of this, only a matter of minutes likely to be one to one focus from teachers answering questions directly to each child. So working at home may be much more intense and if you are working with them one or two hours of school type work will be plenty for most children, a bit more for older ones.

Rather than needing to 'teach' them, this may be a good time to encourage children to pursue existing interests further, research subjects that interest them, make collections or pictures on a theme etc. We are all under unusual stress at the moment so don't be too hard on yourself or them. Try to get a balance between fun, learning and things that need doing anyway. Could be a good time to teach life skills such as cooking, using the washing machine, tidying bedrooms, gardening, etc.

### Parental engagement

Parental engagement is always vital to children's learning but particularly now. The degree of involvement will obviously change with the child's age, moving from direct involvement with learning with young children, to supporting learning without being directly involved with older ones.

What matters most is that parents show young people that learning is valued in the home. Research has shown that, secondary age students valued someone asking how their day of learning had been (even if they had no intention of answering!). They said that that being asked the question showed that someone cared. At the moment they might be questioning what the point is if no one is marking their work or taking an interest. Motivation is likely to be low.

Parental engagement in learning isn't about delivering content as much as it is about supporting young people's self-confidence, their view of themselves as people who can learn. Of course, in the current situation, we are seeing roles and responsibilities change, but this principle remains key.



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### Organising their day

Having some sort of structure to the day is likely to be important for most children. A timetable of roughly when the main events will be happening or at least a schedule suggesting the shape of the day. For example - breakfast, wash and dress, number activities, break, PE, lunchtime, writing and special interests, games or art and craft, screen time, tea-time, reading and bedtime.

This gives the activities a formality and gives the children a sense of predictability and knowing what the day will hold which can be reassuring. You can use words or symbols to suit your child. Persevere with this, it may take some getting used to.

It is always a good idea to be aware of your children's online activity and to make sure they know how to keep safe. But they may be more vulnerable at the moment due to being online more, accessing more websites, or spending more time working independently. For further advice on this see [www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers).

### What should they do?

Keep the conversations about learning going. Perhaps near bedtime have a family round-robin, where everyone says three things they've learned that day (these don't all have to be about 'school' subjects - learning that your brother can't build a tower of plastic cups as high as you can is still learning!). This also shows that adults are interested and still learning too.

Parents often feel that they can't support the learning of older children because the children are learning things they didn't learn or learning in unfamiliar ways. It's not important that parents know the answers; it's fine to say, 'I don't know - how can we find out?' If your child is working on something that's new to you, ask them to explain it. This not only helps the child's self-confidence, it helps to embed the learning.

Try to be as positive as possible about learning at home. You don't need to recreate a classroom at home - classrooms are set up the way they are because they serve to support the learning of a whole group of children.

Children and young people are adaptable, but they are likely to take time to adapt. They may also be frightened and not understand why all the changes are taking place. It's far more important that your children feel loved and supported than they finish every possible worksheet.

### What if they refuse to do anything?

Some children and young people will be finding the current situation more difficult to handle than others. If they are really struggling, have a day off. But frame it as this and try again the next day. Try to make the activities things they will enjoy and gradually build in more challenge. Watching a film together and then discussing it can be a learning activity. It could then lead to: writing a review; describing your favourite character and why you like them; defining what a hero or heroine is and finding examples of them in other films or books; what characteristics do they have in common and in what ways are they different?

Treasure hunts and 'photo safaris' can be useful time fillers. Find ten things beginning with S; take photos of 10 rectangular things; try to find letter shapes in objects around the home and photograph them. Depending on their IT skills, children could then transfer them to a laptop or tablet and make a presentation to show the rest of the family. Learning shouldn't be confined to books, worksheets and answering questions set by teachers - it can mean asking your own questions, finding the answers and generally developing and exploring interests. The important thing is not to give up altogether and leave them totally to their own devices.



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### In summary

- Be realistic. This is a very difficult time for everyone; it's far better to do fewer things that have impact than many things that don't
- Schools shouldn't be sending so much work that parents are going to feel they are failing their children if they can't get through it all. This is not a time for overloading with academic work. They may be setting general work and not tailored to individual needs, so don't be afraid to contact the school if you are concerned.
- Concentrate on what's important – what do they know already? What do they really need to know? What can be left aside?
- Not all families will have access to lots of materials; schools shouldn't be suggesting ideas for learning that put a burden on families in terms of money or excessive time. Contact your school for advice if you do not have the resources necessary.
- Try to make learning at home an enjoyable experience, as far as you can. HAVE FUN.

### Further information and resources

- [www.gov.uk/guidance/help-children-with-send-continue-their-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-children-with-send-continue-their-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19) - Advice for parents and carers looking after children with SEND
- [www.parentkind.org.uk/Parents/Free-learning-resources-for-children](http://www.parentkind.org.uk/Parents/Free-learning-resources-for-children) - free resources organised by age subject and age group
- <https://chatterpack.net/blogs/blog/list-of-online-resources-for-anyone-who-is-isolated-at-home> - free online resources collated for parents of children with additional needs
- [www.theconfidentteacher.com/home-school](http://www.theconfidentteacher.com/home-school) - weekly activities and resources on a specific theme
- [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/dailylessons](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/dailylessons) - daily lessons for primary, secondary and 16+ age groups
- [www.optimus-education.com/free-homework-projects](http://www.optimus-education.com/free-homework-projects) - homework projects to promote independence (Years 1-6)
- <https://stories.audible.com/start-listen> - a collection of free audio stories from across six different languages.
- <https://literacytrust.org.uk/free-resources> - free literary resources based on age group
- [www.driveryouthtrust.com/at-home-activities](http://www.driveryouthtrust.com/at-home-activities) - reading, writing and drawing activities for all ages
- [www.thenational.academy](http://www.thenational.academy) - online lessons and resources created by teachers in response to the lockdown
- [www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-online-education-resources-for-home-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-online-education-resources-for-home-education) - list of online learning resources compiled by the government

### WSSC Guidance

- [https://westsussex.local-offer.org/information\\_pages/608-resources-and-advice-for-supporting-home-learning](https://westsussex.local-offer.org/information_pages/608-resources-and-advice-for-supporting-home-learning) - resources and advice for home learning
- [https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/UKWSSC/2020/04/22/file\\_attachments/...](https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/UKWSSC/2020/04/22/file_attachments/...) - key principals of home learning and suggested web resources

