



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 17TH OCTOBER 2023

SUBJECT: ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members regarding children who receive elective home education (EHE).

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Most children in Wales are educated in school or provision but some parents / carers chose to educate their children at home. Welsh data shows that more parents are choosing to educate their children at home.
- 2.2 There are a number of reasons parents / carers choose to home educate such as:
- Health
 - Cultural
 - Religious
 - Additional learning needs
 - Bullying
 - Flexibility
- 2.3 The right to home educate is conditional on parents providing their child with an 'efficient' and 'suitable' education. Parents are required to fulfil the requirements of section 7 of the Education Act (1996). Parents can choose to home educate at any time. If the child is enrolled at a school, they cannot be removed from roll unless written notification is received. Parents must not be encouraged to remove their child from a school.
- 2.4 Welsh Government statutory guidance (289/2023) set outs rights and responsibilities of parents and Local Authorities (LAs). LAs have a duty to identify where a child is not receiving a suitable education (efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude and to any additional learning needs he may have). LA's can use school attendance orders (SAOs) to satisfy themselves that this is the case.

- 2.5 The LA has reviewed its elective home education (EHE) Policy in light of the recently issued WG statutory guidance, and a robust process for ensuring that it is aware of children who are electively home educated (EHE), assessing 'suitability' and offering support.
- 2.6 The LA uses Strive (data management tool) to track children who are EHE.
- 2.7 Processes are reviewed in line with national and local developments, including the assessment of learners with emerging needs and / or additional learning needs (ALN).

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are requested to note the contents of the report.

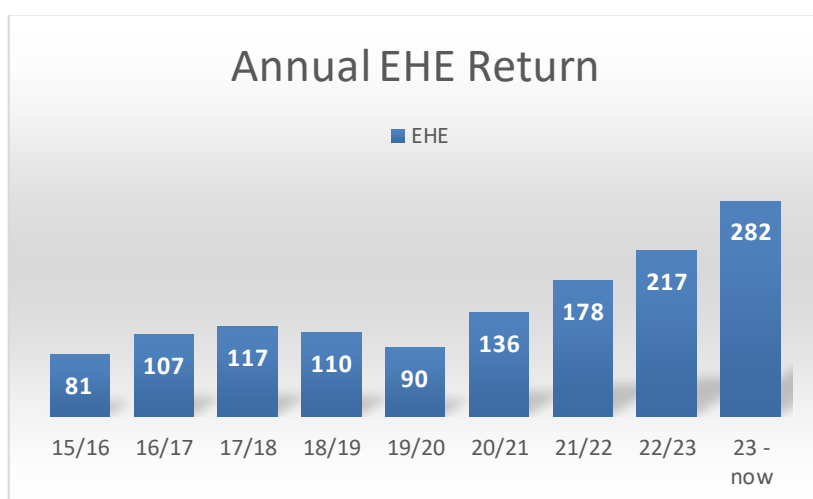
4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The LA is responsible for ensuring that children who are electively home educated receive a suitable education. In this regard members of Scrutiny Committee must be aware of this cohort of young people.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Most children in Wales are educated in school or provision but some parents / carers chose to education their children at home. Welsh data shows that more parents are choosing to educate their children at home.
- 5.2 There are a number of reasons parents / carers chose to home educate such as:
- Health (including mental health)
 - Cultural
 - Religious
 - Additional learning needs
 - Bullying
 - Flexibility
- 5.3 The right to home educate is conditional on parents providing their child with an 'efficient' and 'suitable' education. Parents are required to fulfil the requirements of section 7 of the Education Act (1996). Parents can choose to home educate at any time. If the child is enrolled at a school, they cannot be removed from roll unless written notification is received. Parents must not be encouraged to remove their child from a school.
- 5.4 Where a pupil has an identified additional learning need and is in receipt of a Statement of SEN or an Individual Development Plan (IDP), the home school must not remove the pupil from roll before holding a review of that pupil's statutory document, in conjunction with the LA.
- 5.5 Welsh Government statutory guidance (289/2023) set outs rights and responsibilities of parents and Local Authorities (LAs). LAs have a duty to identify where a child is not receiving a suitable education (Efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have). LA's can use school attendance orders (SAOs) to satisfy themselves that this is the case.

- 5.6 There is a clear process (in line with Welsh Government guidance) for ensuring that the LA is aware of children who are EHE. There is a requirement to write to the LA/school to inform them that the child will become EHE. Upon receipt of this notification, safeguarding checks are made and the EHE Officer contacts the family to establish reasons for the decision to EHE, and to offer support to re-engage with education via the LA or receive an initial visit to discuss the provision of a 'suitable' education. Where no further contact is requested by parents, the LA must be satisfied that there are no safeguarding concerns. If a child has a Statement of Special Education Needs (SEN) or IDP, the process of review remains in place and is undertaken following the LA's formal person-centred planning (PCP) process. Families are made aware that they can approach the LA at any time to review their decision or seek advice.
- 5.7 Where a child is supported by Social Services or has a Statement of SEN / IDP this should be considered carefully in the context of a notification to EHE.
- 5.8 The LA uses Strive (vulnerability profile and data management tool) to track children who are EHE.
- 5.9 Analysis of available information shows that since 2015, a total of 282 children have received elective home education, with an increase of 65 children becoming electively home educated since January 2023, compared with an annual total of 39 children between January 2022 and January 2023.



- 5.10 As of January 2022 and the census collection for EHE, the number of children known to be electively home educated in Caerphilly rose above the Welsh median for the first time (10/22 LAs). However, whilst the rate of pupils per 1000 who are EHE in Caerphilly rose from 5.3% in 2021 to 7.2% in 2022, it remains behind the all-Wales figure of 10.2%, though the overall rate of children becoming EHE in Caerphilly continues to increase.
- 5.11 There is a significant increase in the number of parents who elect to home educate their children in the month September and particularly with children moving into Year 7 and secondary education. In 2022, the percentage of pupils becoming EHE in year groups 7 & 8 in Caerphilly schools was above the all-Wales figure, whilst the opposite is apparent in year groups 9, 10 & 11.

- 5.12 Of the EHE cohort in Caerphilly, 94% had previously been enrolled at a school, compared to 85% of the cohort nationally. There is an equal split in terms of gender of pupils who are EHE in Caerphilly.
- 5.13 Analysis findings from the January 2023 EHE census are due for publication from WG and Data Cymru in October.
- 5.14 The LA has reviewed its processes following the issuing of new statutory guidance by the Welsh Government in May 2023.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 In considering the recommendations the following assumptions have been made:

Scrutiny members should be kept informed of how the LA fulfils its duty to ensure that children who are EHE receive a suitable education, trends in data and any changes that impact upon the LA and practice.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 This report requires no specific equalities impact assessment.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 With the emphasis now placed on LAs to support the reintegration of learners into education including, where appropriate, EOTAS provisions, there are likely to be increased demands on alternative provisions.
- 8.2 WG grant funding to support staffing of an EHE specific post from March 2024 remains uncertain, whilst increasing numbers of parents / carers continue to choose to electively home educate their children.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 In light of the ALN Act there are likely to be increased demands on services and additional responsibilities linked to children who have additional learning needs.
- 9.2 The current EHE Officer is employed on a secondment basis until March 2024 only.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report reflects the views of the consultees based on consultations undertaken to date.

11. STATUTORY POWERS

- 11.1 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015
Education (Wales) Act, 2014
Education Act, 1996

Equality Act, 2010
Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal (Wales) Act, 2018
Social Services and Wellbeing Act, 2014
UNCRC, 1989

Author(s): Sarah Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN)
Melanie Archibald (Senior Advisory Teacher)

Consultees: Christina Harray, Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director, Education and Corporate Services
Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Councillor Theresa Parry, Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy
Jane Southcombe, Finance Manager
Nicola Hooper, Finance Officer
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Manager
Adelaide Dunn, Lead for Wellbeing and Equity (EAS)
Nicola Chapman, HR Service Manager
Ceri Jenkins, HR Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services