

Elective Home Education Meeting

18.01.11

PRESENT

Cath Pealing (Manager- Pupil Inclusion & EHE) , Joanne Berry (Senior Officer - Pupil Inclusion & EHE)

Home educators: LGL, CS, Mr & Mrs R, Mr J, LS Mr SO

CP welcomed parents to the meeting and thanked all present for attending.

The meeting was arranged to develop and improve the relationship between Wigan's EHE service and Home educating families. For some time, it has been acknowledged by the team that changes need to be made to the processes Wigan currently follow in relation to home education, including building a positive relationship with the home educating community and the communication with parents (verbal and written).

CP opened up the discussion by talking about how it has been recognised that some home educators choose to send in educational philosophies. The guidance notes for parents have been amended to reflect this. The home educators were in agreement and felt that this was a step in the right direction.

Feedback was received from the group in relation to the forms used. It was commented that the forms are not very user friendly and that some struggle to record what they are doing in this way. People would like to see age on the form instead of national curriculum year. It was also commented that the labeling of information (in particular on the website) needed to be amended. It was felt that some improvements had been made in the feedback of written submissions but this will change again when CP has further reviewed the paperwork to ensure it reflects what we need to know and acknowledges the different home educating philosophies used. CS passed written feedback and comments to CP who thanked her for the time taken to do this and will consider these when making the changes.

CP spoke about the proposed changes to the EHE review process and that schools have been consulted about the LA commissioning the 'monitoring' role from them. There was a suggestion that this option is also opened out to the home education community to take on this role. CP is still exploring options and will consider this and discuss with senior managers.

A discussion took place about Safeguarding and finding the right balance. Frustrations that EHE families get linked to Safeguarding/child deaths. CP explained the team do not take the assumption that because children are home educated they are more likely to be abused. It is assumed that the child is happy and safe unless there are reasons reported for us to believe

otherwise. The LA has a responsibility for safeguarding all children which includes those that are home educated. The concerns of the group were noted. Some families need additional intervention from the LA as we are aware of their situations before they withdraw their children to home educate – we aim to support these families to avoid stressful situations at a later date where they feel they had no options. We need to work closer with the home educating community to look at support networks for these families to continue during difficult times if appropriate.

Some home educators spoke of their negative experience of withdrawing their child(ren) from school in order to home educate.

It was recommended that an awareness raising session is held with both primary & secondary schools to remind them of the law and guidance in relation to EHE or a pack to be sent round to schools to help them understand. This would include what support families need, what they don't need, legal duty etc.

It was also commented that some home educators have had a negative experience with other agencies, i.e. Connexions, Police, Education Welfare Service etc. These do not appear to be isolated incidents and occur more often than what the home education service know. CP will look into any connections with EHE service as this should not happen. CP also agreed that the 'opt out' process for Connexions would revert back to 'opt in'.

It was also commented that education welfare service had on occasion turned up unannounced on the doorstep and this was seen by some families as nonsensical and intrusive. CP explained that this should not happen unless a referral has been made which will be done if information on the education being provided is not received within time limits. Initial contact and confirmation is expected by the LA with the family in the first few weeks to confirm EHE. 3 months is then given before more detailed evidence is required and to allow families to embed their philosophy. Families do sometimes move address or do not receive post, sometimes visits are done just to check people do still live there but this should not be done intrusively. CP & JB will discuss with manager for the education welfare service to ensure that this does not occur in the future without our notification and approval.

A discussion took place around funding /pupil premium. CP fed back a response that had been received from the Department of Education (see Appendix 1).

Home educators felt that some colleges were difficult to communicate with when trying to access support/exams etc. Discussion took place about exam centres, CP/JB to speak to Rose Bridge re: private candidates. JB to email the exams officer to get information on the exams and boards – to be attached to web site.

It was suggested that there be an opportunity for home educators and the home education service to meet up more regularly maybe once a quarter. Rooms, parking, facilities and access are an issue therefore it was suggested

that future meetings be held at a neutral venue ie, libraries, sure start centres, outdoors/parks. CP will look at arranging and will aim for May for the next meeting. Preferences were for afternoons, avoiding school traffic and at a venue that is food friendly. The purpose of these meetings will be to allow the families to share information with each other, to develop a more positive relationship with the LA and to impart and ask for information if appropriate.

Confusion over visits currently being undertaken by Mr Raynor. It appears that Mr Raynor is informing parents that he will see them again in 6 months time however the home education service would only visit again in approximately 12 months if there are no concerns.

The group raised the issue of truancy sweeps where they may be stopped in public and asked for their details. It was felt by some that a home education card system may be helpful as there appears to be a lack of awareness of the law in relation to home education by some professionals. eg Police and education welfare officers when carrying out these sweeps. This would be entirely optional, the card would carry the Wigan logo, a quick reference to the law and your rights to be treated appropriately and the home education teams contact details. This is just an idea at this stage and CP will have to explore further before we look at implementing.

The meeting concluded with CP thanking those that attended for coming and for their very valuable feedback. The notes will be circulated to those attending by email and put on the website. Members of the group agreed to circulate wider within their community of home educators.

After the meeting, CS & LGL expressed an interest in families being able to access the (subsidised?) music tuition/instrument loan that schooled children have access to.

In response to the action within the notes above, please see some updates below:

- All letters from the EHE team around accessing the CONNEXIONS service have now reverted back to opt in rather than opt out.
- The proposals around opening up the 'monitoring' role to the EHE community were taken by CP to a senior managers meeting and it was approved to explore this further. CP is currently drawing up an Service Level Agreement that will be shared with home educators in addition to schools in order for each to bid for the work. Any members of the EHE community wishing to undertake this role will need to be self-employed.
- Joanne spoke to Julie Tomlinson (exams officer at Rose Bridge) who confirmed that the school do except external candidates for exams.

Currently they have used exam boards AQA and Edexcel.

There is a £30 administration fee for every exam as well as the cost to the exam board and a invigilator fee of £10 per hour (the invigilator fee

is split between the number of candidates sitting the exam). The school pay the exam board fee and invoice after the exam has been sit.

As far as she is aware, school will be looking to continue to offer this service as the take up especially this year has been quite good.

Any interested candidates will need to complete the attached form Appendix 2.

- There is no subsidy for the music service unless the child is entitled to free school meals (however he did confirm that is this could be evidenced they would subsidise).

The lessons would be limited to teaching in the music centres in the evenings - this would be bespoke lessons arranged with families and the cost is dependent on the length of the lesson e.g. Individual 20 minutes : £9.70 a wk 1/2 hour £14.60. If subsidised they take off £1.85 per lesson. They will also hire instruments rather than you having to buy at £33.00 a term. All subject to availability. The man who runs the service is David Little and he is happy to discuss your needs and costs etc individually. His number is: 01942 776169.

- Suggestions for amendments to procedure and correspondence are currently being considered and amendments being made.
- I am continuing to look at dates and venues for us to meet up and will let you know those as soon as possible.

Appendix 1.

Dear Ms Pealing,

Thank you for your email, dated 15 December, about Elective Home Education.

Ministers are still considering in detail the policy for home education and whether any changes need to be made to the existing arrangements. Ministers are aware of the strong views expressed by both home educators and local authorities and will take these into account in considering what, if any, changes need to be made, in due course.

With regards to your query on funding and pupil premium, the Spending Review has been exceptionally tough, and we have fulfilled our commitment to make as much money as possible available to schools. Unfortunately this means that we are unable to provide any further support to home educators. We continue to respect the right of parents to educate their children at home and we are still developing policy on this issue.

In view of the sensitive and controversial nature of this policy, we will not be in a position to determine the funding for Home Education in the immediate future as we continue to consult on future arrangements. Existing arrangements where local authorities can draw down funding where they provide significant support for home educated children with special educational needs, or to enable a home educated child to attend a college of further education will not be affected in the meantime.

I hope this helps.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely,

Lisa White
Independent Education, ISPS & School Governance
www.education.gov.uk

Appendix 2



ROSE BRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL



Science

EXTERNAL CANDIDATE ENTRY REQUEST FORM

To be completed by candidate

Month of Exam	
UCI Number	
ULN Number	
Exam Number	
Identification ie Passport. No.	

Surname		Male/Female
Forename		Date of Birth
Address		
Contact Telephone Number		
E mail address		

Subject Title		Level	
Exam Board		Subject number and entry code	
Unit No.	Fee	Unit No.	Fee
Unit No.	Fee	Unit No.	Fee

*Do you have dyslexia, any learning difficulties or a disability (including medical conditions that may require Access arrangements for your examination. (Evidence will be required)
If yes please tick this box and the Exams Office will contact you to discuss*

<p>Declaration: I wish to be entered for the above examination. I understand that I will not be entered until payment is received. I agree to the £30 administration charge for each subject I am entering. Student Signature.....</p> <p>Date.....</p> <p>Signature of Head of Department</p> <p>Date.....</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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