

Education Secretary announces package of support for home educating families

Support for home educators will include help with exam registrations, the same health offers made to children in school, access to Wales' digital learning platform Hwb, exploring opportunities for home-educating families to learn Welsh and support from Careers Wales.

The Education Secretary has also announced that she intends to consult on using existing legislation to require local authorities to establish a database to assist them in identifying children not on a school register, not in education otherwise than at school and not receiving a suitable education. At the same time the Cabinet Secretary will consult on statutory guidance setting out the arrangements for the operation of the database and how it will be managed.

The consultation will consider which partners will be able to contribute to providing the most complete database, such as local health boards, and whether independent schools should be required to tell local authorities about the pupils who attend those schools.

The above powers could not be used to compel a parent to register that their child is being home-educated. However, the powers would enable the local authority to compile a reasonably complete database of children not on any local authority education or independent school register.

The statutory guidance will outline the arrangements local authorities will be expected to put in place to identify home-educated children, and to assess the suitability of education.

In order to be able to make an assessment the education is suitable, it would not be unreasonable for the local authority to see the child. This will be for the local authority to decide and will be influenced by a number of factors including the context and circumstances surrounding each individual child.

The statutory guidance will provide clear advice to local authorities on this matter.

The Education Secretary will announce further details to the National Assembly for Wales in a statement this afternoon.

Announcing the plans today, Kirsty Williams said:

"I fully respect the choice of parents to home educate their children and nothing I am considering or proposing changes that. There are many valid, different and sometimes complex reasons why parents would choose to go down this route and in some cases this will be the best choice for the child.

“But this choice must be balanced with the right of children to receive a suitable education. Local authorities, by establishing a database supported by statutory guidance, will be able to assess whether a child is receiving a suitable education and, if they are educated at home, that home educators have the support they need.

“I know that home-educating families in Wales have previously had limited and varied levels of support from local authorities, and no support from the Welsh Government. I want that to change.

“That’s why we’re developing a package of educational support that includes making Hwb available to home-educated children, help with exam registrations, and exploring options for home-educating families to learn Welsh and a clear offer of support from Careers Wales.

“Balancing the right of the child to receive a suitable education with the choice of parents to home-educate is always going to be a challenge, but I believe the plans we will consult on represent a sensible and proportionate way forward.”