

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 30th March 2023

LOCATION: Hybrid

TITLE: Update in relation to Elective Home Education

PURPOSE OF REPORT: Update in relation to Elective Home Education

**REASON SCRUTINY HAVE
REQUESTED THE
INFORMATION:** Annual review

BACKGROUND:

In Wales parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that their children receive a suitable education. Although this responsibility is usually delegated to schools, some parents choose to exercise it directly by providing education based in the home. The Local Authority (LA) needs to be satisfied that every child in their area is receiving suitable education (as stated in Section 437 of the Education Act 1996). Ceredigion LA respect the rights of parents who wish to home-educate, however, the right to home-educate is not a fundamental one. It is conditional on parents providing their child with an 'efficient' and 'suitable' education in accordance with the child's age, aptitude, and ability. Parents may educate their children at home providing they fulfil the requirements of section 7 of the Education Act 1996.

Ceredigion has the highest relative number of home educated pupils in Wales (per pupil head of population). Ultimately, we would like to reduce this number to be more in line with other local authorities who have a similar context to ours in relation to sparsity and linguistic demographic. The aim is to better engage with and support families who may wish to enrol their children at school and to better support families who have made a firm decision to home-educate.

The LA recognises that the Elective Home Educated community within Ceredigion is a diverse population with families choosing to home-educate for a variety of reasons.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Up until 2nd March 2023 Ceredigion have 246 home educated children.

Data for the cohort of home-educated children recorded by 22 local authorities as the current known population as at the census date of 18 January 2022.

- An increase of around 10% in the number of home-educated children across Wales (36% last year). In Ceredigion the number of home-educated children had fallen by -6%.
- Ceredigion still has a higher rate in Wales of home-schooled children with 28.2 per 1,000 pupils in January 2022 (30.6 per 1,000 in year 2021).
- The number of children previously enrolled in a school is less to compare to Wales. Ceredigion has more children who have never been on a school roll to compare to Wales. 38% of children were not previously enrolled in a school in comparison to 15% in Wales.
- Of the children enrolled in school 89% were enrolled by LA-run schools (down 2%) and 11% (Up 2%) were educated outside the LA area.

Process following de-registration or child known to be educated at home:

It should be noted that there is no legal requirement for children educated at home to be registered with the LA. However, once a child is known to the LA there is a duty to seek further information to be satisfied that an efficient education is being provided. The LA keeps a register of children known to be Electively Home Educated within Ceredigion.

Once the LA is notified of a child's withdrawal from a school the LA will send a letter to acknowledge de-registration. The letter includes an enquiry form that parents/guardians should complete and return within 14 days: this form outlines education intent and reasons behind de-registration.

It should be noted that there is no statutory requirement upon the LA to monitor the quality and range of the education provided. However, the LA has a team of officers who offer annual visits to all families. Children who are home-educated are not required to follow any specified curriculum or meet criteria for the number of learning hours. Home education approaches can be varied from a formal, structured, schedule-based and mostly within the home environment, through to autonomous or child-led education or unschooling. The approach used can be tailored to the child's needs, interests and learning styles.

During annual visits to monitor suitable education the LA will make themselves available to meet parents at a suitable venue to view the child's/ children's work and resources. At times the LA officer will request an opportunity to talk with the child, although it is noted that they have no legal right to insist on such a meeting. During these visits LA officers are able to offer advice on the education provided, they recognise that the customs, practices, and standards in school-based education are not necessarily relevant to home education.

If the LA has concerns that parents are not providing the child with a suitable education, then a review visit will be arranged within 3 months. If concerns remain following a review meeting the

LA may consider a School Attendance Order. Parents receive a copy of reports compiled as a result of any meetings.

Home visits completed in the last 12 months.

2019 – not recorded for this year.

2020 – 65% (45% in Wales)

2021 – 48% (47% in Wales)

2022 – 63% (34% in Wales)

From September 2022 – 2nd March 2023 we have offered 117 annual visits.

Number of pupils who have returned to school:

2019 – 33 pupils in Ceredigion returned to school

2020 – 26 pupils in Ceredigion returned to school

2021 – 27 pupils in Ceredigion returned to school

2022 - 61 pupils in Ceredigion returned to school

2023 – up until 2nd March 29 pupils have returned to school.

Number of pupils who have become home educated:

	Never been in school	Out of County Schools	Ceredigion Schools	Total
2019	14	6	50	70
2020	38	6	79	123
2021	28	13	60	101
2022	22	6	22	50
2023	30	3	28	61

Two members of the Inclusion team, Angharad Russell-Evans and Catrin Petcher have received a 'Kit' award for excellence' gold certificate from Education Otherwise in recognition of support offered to home educated families in Ceredigion.

Safeguarding

- Whether in school or home schooling, the wellbeing and safeguarding of all children should be everyone's priority. Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility.
- If the Education Inclusion Service has concerns that a child may be at risk of being abused, neglected, or subjected to other forms of harm, they have a duty to report under the Social Service and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
- Any concerns are shared with the Designated Safeguarding Officer for School Services as well as other relevant authorities such as Porth Cynnal.
- There is clear communication between Porth Cynnal School Services, and the Designated Safeguarding Officer for School Services e.g., when notification comes via

"Operation Encompass", or if a MARF referral has been received from Porth Cynnal there will be communication and agreement on who and how we will operate.

- When concerns arise, we prioritise visits to these families, as well as carrying out joint visits with Porth Cynnal, Health, and any other relevant agency when appropriate.

WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why

Summary:

Long term:

Integration:

Collaboration:

Involvement:

Prevention:

RECOMMENDATION (S):

To be informed on the current numbers of home educated children in Ceredigion.

To be informed on how Schools Services are reviewing the provision of home educated children.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

To raise awareness of the support that is being provided by the Ceredigion Schools services.

Contact Name:

Catrin Petcher Gillian Evans

Designation:

Education Inclusion Service Gwasanaethau Dysgu

Date of Report:

9th of March 2023

Acronyms:

LA – Local Authority

MARF – Multi-Agency referral Form