

**TÚSLA**

An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

# ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION ASSESSMENT & REGISTRATION

## Home Education applications – Frequently Asked Questions

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## 1. Who is eligible to apply for home education?

Parent(s) / guardian(s) of a child aged between 6 years up to their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## 2. When can I start home educating my child?

You may commence home education once AEARS has confirmed in writing receipt of a complete/valid Home Education application.

## 3. How long will my child remain on the Section 14 Register?

A child will remain on the register until their 16th birthday.

If a child returns to school at any stage, it is important to notify AEARS so the child's name can be removed from the Section 14 Register as their name will be placed on the register of a Department of Education school. A child can only be listed on one register at any given time.

## 4. Why is the consent of both parents/legal guardians required?

It is a legal requirement that all legal guardian(s) give consent for home education<sup>1</sup>. All legal guardians MUST sign the declaration in section 12-part C of the application form or provide a court order dispensing with the second parent's/guardian's consent for this application's purpose.

Married parents are automatically joint guardians of their child. Neither separation nor divorce change this. The written consent of all legal guardians must be provided for applications to be processed.

Correspondence in relation to the application and any subsequent assessment and registration decision will be sent to each legal guardian.

In some exceptional circumstances, e.g., temporary protection order, where it is not possible to provide the signature of both legal guardians, one signature may be acceptable. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis and supporting documentation may / will be requested in these cases.

If the status of the legal guardians has changed from the original consent provided on the application form, you must inform the Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service (AEARS) of this change.

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<sup>1</sup> S.I. No 758 of 2024 - Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (Prescribed Form) (Section 14) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

## 5. What is a certified copy of a birth certificate/passport and where can I get one?

A certified document is a photocopy of an original document that has been viewed, validated, and marked as original sighted by one of the following:

- A practicing Solicitor or Commissioner of Oaths
- A member of An Garda Síochána
- A Notary Public
- Peace Commissioner

The completed application form must be submitted with a certified copy of the child's birth certificate. Please do not send in the original copy of your child's birth certificate as it will not be accepted unless it is certified. If a birth certificate is not available, a certified copy of the child's valid passport will also be accepted

## 6. Can my child be home educated for a few days a week and attend school for the remainder of the week?

No. A child's name can only be on one register – either the register of a Department of Education school, or the Section 14 Register. Current education legislation does not support dual registration by a child or young person within education. The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 requires the child's name to be removed from one register to be included in another.

## 7. When will my child be removed from the school register of a Department of Education (DE) School?

When a valid application form has been received, the Tusla AEARS team will inform the principal of your child's previous Department of Education school and your child's school record will reflect that they are being home educated and are awaiting assessment. Their absences from school will be fully covered by the Education Welfare Services monitoring of school attendance and absenteeism.

However, a Department of Education school cannot remove a child's name from their register until such a time as they are informed that the child has been placed on the Section 14 Register (for children receiving an education in a place other than a recognised school) or on the register of another Department of Education school.

If your child is registered following the assessment of the education provision, your child's previous school will be contacted in writing and informed that they can now remove your child's name from the school register.

## 8. Change in Circumstances

If there is a change in circumstances from your original application for home education, for example your child has returned to school or there is a change to the information provided on the application form e.g. a change of address, you need to inform AEARS of this change so the service can update the details on record.

## 9. Does my child have the same entitlement to welfare benefits as a child attending a recognised school?

Yes. All children and young people on the section 14 Register are entitled to the same status as children receiving their education in a recognised school. Therefore, they are entitled to benefits in line with children attending a Department of Education school, such as child benefit, vision and hearing screening tests and immunisation programmes etc. For more information in relation to these entitlements, please contact the relevant government department e.g.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/departments/departments-and-social-protection>

<https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/departments/departments-of-health/>

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/pubinfo/pcischedule/immschedule/>

## 10. Once my child is home-educated can I apply for the free bookscheme?

No, the free book scheme only applies to children attending a Department of Education School.

## 11. Is home education the same as home tuition?

No. The Home Education application form does not relate to families who wish to avail of the home tuition scheme provided through the Department of Education. The home tuition scheme relates specifically to a compensatory educational service for children who, for a number of reasons such as chronic illness, are unable to attend school. The scheme also provides compensatory educational service for children with special educational needs seeking an education placement. For further information please contact the Department of Education. ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie), 01- 889 6400).

## 12. When should I expect an assessment?

AEARS is presently working through a waiting list of applications for assessment. Each application will be reviewed and prioritised on a case-by-case basis subject to the availability of a suitable assessor. The allocation of an assessment may occur in some circumstances within a few weeks, or it may take up to 12 months for an assessment to take place.

### 13. What should I expect prior to the home education assessment?

An assessor will contact you to discuss a suitable date for the assessment. At this time the assessor will provide an outline of what will happen during the assessment. The estimated time of a preliminary assessment is approximately 2 hours but may be longer if more than one child is being assessed. The person providing the education provision is required to be present at the assessment.

It is important that when an assessor makes contact to arrange an assessment that arrangements are facilitated. Failure to do so may result in your application being refused and a referral to Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) for further follow-up.

If contact cannot be established to arrange an assessment date and AEARS has not been notified of a change of circumstances, the service may liaise with other government agencies to check that the details on the application form are still valid.

### 14. What should I expect at the assessment?

A **Preliminary Assessment** will look at the education that is being provided or proposed to be provided, what equipment and materials you are using or proposed to be used and the time spent or proposed to be spent on education to determine if a certain minimum education is being met.

The assessment is normally done as a structured interview with you as the parent/guardian and, if appropriate, anyone responsible for the child's education. The assessor will meet the child as part of the assessment process.

At the end of the assessment the assessor will discuss a brief outline of his/her findings with you but may require a further review of all the information obtained during the assessment to determine the final outcome. When the report is complete, you will receive a draft copy to review content for factual accuracy and to comment on findings. You may contact the service should you wish to discuss the report's findings. Factual errors will be corrected, and any clarifications answered.

If following a preliminary or a review assessment AEARS is unable to determine if a certain minimum education is being met a Comprehensive Assessment will take place.

A **Comprehensive Assessment** is a more detailed assessment that will involve entering the place where the child is being educated and observing the child receiving the education that is being provided. The assessor will observe the premises, equipment and materials used in providing education for the child. The assessment will include assessment of the child with regard to his/her intellectual, emotional, and physical development, including an assessment of his/her knowledge and understanding of such subjects, and proficiency in such exercises and disciplines, as the assessor considers appropriate.

A **Review Assessment** will look at the child's progress since the last assessment to ensure the continued provision of a certain minimum education.

Further details are available here:

[Guidelines on the Assessment of Education in Places Other Than Recognised Schools.](#)

## 15. What are the possible outcomes from an assessment?

Following an assessment the possible outcomes are;

- The child's name will be entered onto the Register
- The child's name will be entered onto the Register with conditions attached
- The child's name will be retained on the Register (following a review)
- The child's name will be retained on the Register with conditions attached (following a review)
- The child's name is not entered onto the Register
- The child's name is removed from the Register.

## 16. What are Conditions / Recommendations?

Following an assessment, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will receive a copy of the draft assessment report. The assessment report may include conditions attached to the registration and/or advisory recommendations from the assessor.

### **Conditions:**

As part of the assessment process, conditions will be attached where deficits have been identified through assessment relating to the intellectual, social, emotional, or physical development of the child in line with the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 Section 14 (12)(a)(ii).

Where specific conditions have been attached, these conditions will be reviewed within 6 months or sooner if required. All conditions attached to a registration decision can be appealed by parent(s) or guardian(s).

### **Recommendations:**

As part of the preliminary and ongoing / review assessment process, advisory recommendations may be made by assessors in relation to the education being provided to the child where areas for improvement are identified. The recommendations made are at the professional discretion of the individual assessors

The recommendations offered by an assessor may include educational resources, experiences, and activities, which could be of benefit to the child in securing and developing skills to help them better reach their potential.

## 17. What is a Factual Accuracy Form?

Following an assessment, a factual accuracy form will be sent with the draft report to be returned by the parent(s)/guardian(s) within 10 working days. Where a factual accuracy form is completed and returned, this will be reviewed and the report will be updated in instances where it is appropriate to do so and where it is required following discussion

between the assessor and manager in consultation with the parent(s)/guardian(s). Only information that was available at the time of assessment can be added to the report.

#### 18. What exactly is a minimum education and how will I know if my child is receiving a minimum education?

While there is no legal definition of a “certain minimum education”, the guidelines regarding a certain minimum provision are set out in the [\*Guidelines on the Assessment of Education in Places Other Than Recognised Schools\*](#) prepared and issued by the Department of Education 2003.

#### 19. Are there specific subject areas to be covered when I home educate?

The areas covered in the assessment of the home education provision are intellectual development (literacy, numeracy, and other learning areas), social, emotional, and moral development, and the child’s physical development.

The assessor will, through consultation with the parent/guardian, gather information and evidence relating to these areas during the assessment. Further information relating to this can be found in the [\*Guidelines on the Assessment of Education in Places Other Than Recognised Schools\*](#) prepared and issued by the Department of Education 2003.

#### 20. Will my child get an exemption from Irish?

No. Home education does not entitle students to an exemption from the study of Irish in the event of a return to mainstream education. Parents should acquaint themselves with the examination and career implications of not taking Irish and/or having a second language.

It is suggested that parents should consult with the

- Department of Education ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie), 01-8896400) and the
- State Examinations Commission ([www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie), 090-644 2700)

regarding the requirement for Irish and/or an additional language.

#### 21. How can a home educated child apply to undertake state examinations (Junior Cycle and Leaving Cycle Examinations)

It is up to the parent/guardian to approach a post primary school / program of education setting to enquire about sitting Junior / Leaving Cycle State examinations as an external candidate. Advice can be sought from the State Examination Commission on [www.examination.ie](http://www.examination.ie).

**22. Can my child still qualify for special needs support provided through their previous school?**

No. Once the application for Home Education has been made all support provided to or facilitated through the child's previous school ceases. This includes the summer provision where support is available for a child with complex special educational needs during the summer period.