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Homeschooling in Scotland

In Scotland Homeschooling is called home education.

Ironically, the root of the world school comes from the greek schole which is ‘leisurely learning’, a term more descriptive of home education than what we call school in our world today.

In Scotland, although home educators can easily access it, you do not have to follow the national curriculum or take the national exams. There is great freedom for home educators in what and how they learn.

The legislative position in the Scottish Government’s guidance states in the Standards in Scotland’s schools Act 2000 that a child’s education must be “ directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential. “

That leaves quite a broad view of a suitable education.

The compulsory education starting age is 5 years old.

Most children attend Nursery school and then go onto primary school at 4 or 5 years old.

This is when children learn to read in a formal education setting and follow the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence.

However, a home educators philosophy might be inspired by Steiner Waldorf education, for example, where formal schooling is kept until a child is 7 years old. They can do this. This is great as it allows families to find the approach that is best for their family and their child.

There are many curricula which can be bought with 1000’s of curriculum covering many different approaches most of which are developed in America.

There are also online schools which vary in prices.

Therefore if a parent is unconfident in their ability to teach a certain subject they can access many resources designed specifically for homeschooling.

Furthermore, home educating families get together to form community support groups, which are often called co-ops.

Here parents organise group days out, group sports and classes where they either bring in a professional tutor or the parents teach different topics to a class of home educated children.

These can be organised how the families want, they can meet twice a week or twice a month and may take a specific approach such as a classical co-op.

When it comes to taking exams, it is a bit more difficult. This is because the Scottish qualifications need coursework to be externally assessed because coursework grades count towards the final mark. If home educators would like to take the Scottish National exams they usually sign up for classes at a community college.

However, there is also the option of using online schools or independently studying for other exams most notably the IGCSE.

There are no online schools for Scotland, children access UK or American ones.

When it comes to actually taking the final exam families usually apply to be an external candidate through an independent private school, for example, a child studying IGCSES at home in Aberdeen may take the exam at Albyn School.

There is a greater flexibility for home educators with how they approach their exam years.

They don't have to take 8 subjects in one year, they can take longer or a shorter amount of time to study for them, study them alone or in a class.

They can also choose what they study, there are no compulsory subjects. Although it is recommended that families look at desired University entry requirements.

This flexibility allows for less stress, better mental health, greater comprehension of course content and allows for accommodation and support for students who have additional support needs.

It is worth noting that New Zealand, has a government online school which allows homeschoolers to access all national courses at a cheaper price than most private online schools.

New Zealand also provides financial support to homeschooling families.

I think this is a good idea because, it could reduce possible inequality.

Some homeschool curriculum such as, Sonlight, are quite expensive.

Providing means based financial support for educational resources could help prevent home education from becoming an elitist option.

In Scotland, there is no financial support for resources for home educating families, although they can access after age 16, education maintenance allowance.

Another option that we have in Scotland is flexischooling.

This is where a child attends school part time, for example 3 or 4 days a week and is home educated the rest of the time although this is a more established option in rural England, it is an option in Scotland as well.

A great example of how flexischooling can benefit families and schools is Hollinsclough CofE school which went from 5 pupils to 70 pupils when it allowed flexischooling.

Flexischooling is great as it can allow access to the facilities, teachers and group learning of a local school and group learning of a local school and the many benefits of home education.

However, there is irregularity with local authorities in their allowance of flexischooling.

Whilst it is fairly well used as an option in Dumfries and Edinburgh, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City councils refuse to allow it.

This can be very frustrating for families in Aberdeenshire who believe that flexischooling would be the best educational option for their child and family.

A large number of families who choose to flexischool are either those who have a child with additional support needs or who disagree with the school starting age of 5 years old and would rather delay formal learning or allow more valuable time for play like many successful European countries.

I would therefore recommend that you make sure there is a common response across all regions and that all local authorities have a thorough understanding of home education laws.

Also to ensure that the families of your country are aware of the valid option and the different ways that they can home educate such as unschooling, Charlotte Mason approach or online school.

Many families are dissatisfied or struggling through the traditional school system especially with children with additional support needs but aren't even aware that is an option or if they are, they believe untrue myths and stereotypes.

Maybe home education guidance booklets could be handed out at early learning centres or at early childhood wellness doctor check ups,

just our like bookbug early literacy programme and early years childcare funding information is widely available.

Whilst I have not covered all there is to cover, hopefully I have given you an idea of how homeschooling works in Scotland.