

Education Philosophies and Education Reports

Which is which?

There is often some confusion in home education circles about education philosophies and reports. The philosophy and the report are two quite different things but are often presented in the same document; which might bear either name.

An educational philosophy is a statement of your beliefs about what education should set out to achieve and the methods you intend to use to reach that goal.

An education report sets out what you have done (usually over the last year).

Why write an educational philosophy?

Generally, the Local Authority is uninterested in your education philosophy. They only want to check up on what you have actually done and are therefore interested in receiving a report. However, the education philosophy does serve an important purpose as it allows you to position the goalposts. The case of *Harrison Vs Harrison 1981* established the legal precedent in respect of the fundamental parental duty to provide 'an efficient education.' The precedent was to define 'efficient' as 'that which achieves what it sets out to achieve.' Therefore, by defining in writing what you are setting out to achieve, you are effectively defining what section 7 means specifically to your family.

Why write an education report?

The local authority does have a duty to make informal inquiries about home education if they have information that makes it appear to them that a suitable education may not be taking place, or if they do not know if education is suitable.

It is advisable that you always respond to these inquiries. It is entirely up to you how you choose to respond. You may be happy to accept a visit in your home or a meeting away from the home (this approach is generally not recommended), you may want to fill in a form provided by the local authority (but the forms often assume a particular structure to education that many home educators do not follow), or you could write a report.

How long should the report be?

Reports come in two lengths:

Medium (3 pages)

Comprehensive (5 to 8 pages)

If the LA is making informal inquiries about the education and you do not want a visit (check with locals about the person visiting) then the medium one is fine.

If you are answering a notice to satisfy under s 437 of the Education Act 1996, or are writing a report for a child EHC Plan then you need the longer one.

Title Page

Home Education Report for [child's name] [DOB]

Introduction

This part is primarily discussing your philosophy and should generally be brief.

- What do you think education is for
- How do you think education should be structured and look for your family?
- Who is involved in the education of your family (note parents should have a 'significant' involvement even if you employ full-time tutors)?

About [Child's name]

Use this section to discuss your child's needs, attitudes and aspirations. These should be age appropriate – for instance at the secondary school level they should include discussion about potential career paths and what exams might be appropriate.

- how you apply your philosophy to each child
- how you meet their strengths and weaknesses and SEN
- Mention any special needs
- future plans and ambitions of children

The Education

Use this section particularly to emphasise the opportunities for the child to be stimulated. This could be outings, achievements, or other means appropriate to each child.

- How you go about educating, possibly what a typical day looks like
- Ensure you cover reading, literacy, English, and numeracy (maths)
- Examples of implementing the education with each child (we saw a hot air balloon festival in August and this led to discussions about the physics of flight, the history of flight, and looking into geography: distances travelled by balloons, how the topography affects their flight, weather issues, etc), or (In order to provide a firm foundation on which to study for GCSEs we are doing a maths course on XXXX with Talulaetc)
- Any achievements you are proud of
- in preparation for GCSEs, or the world of work, etc
- Any particular socialisation opportunities, or a general comment about being out and about and meeting lots of folks

It is important that you explain progression since you commenced home education, or over the previous year, as appropriate. This is crucial for literacy and numeracy.

Categorise your list of resources so the list reflects your methods. If you are autonomous then you would probably choose to categorise by media and type if you are more structured than possibly by subject. In general terms, local authorities are more positively inclined to a subject-based report and even most parents can describe their provision in this way. Whatever method you choose, you must specifically explain literacy and numeracy