



2016/0008566POJN

Lord Nash

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools

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Councillor Ray Bolton
Chairman, Children and Young People Select Committee
Hampshire County Council, Room 114, Elizabeth II Court South
The Castle, Winchester
Hampshire
SO23 8UJ

2 March 2016

Dear Councillor Bolton,

Thank you for your letters of 5 February, addressed to the Secretary of State and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Women, Equalities and Family Justice, about elective home education. I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area.

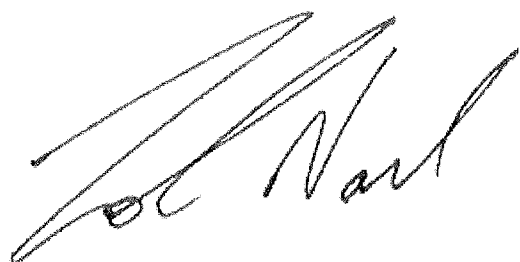
We are aware that a number of local authorities feel that their power to determine the suitability of home education, or to keep track of children being educated in this way, is not equal to the duty they have to take if a child is not receiving suitable education. You have described the process which should allow for action if parents cannot show that the education they provide is suitable, but we know that in many cases there is a reluctance to proceed to a full school attendance order because of the difficulty of showing to a court that the education is not suitable.

The government respects the right of parents to educate their children at home and we appreciate that home education works very well for many children who receive it. We also have to acknowledge, however, that not all children who are said to be home-educated enjoy these advantages. It is important that parents or other providers of home education ensure that their child receives full-time education suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Local authorities have no statutory duty to monitor the quality of the education being provided on a routine basis. They do have powers to make enquiries with parents as to whether a 'suitable' education is being provided and where it is not, to issue a school attendance order. They only have power to enter a home if there are safeguarding concerns, as opposed to educational ones.

There are strong feelings on both sides about the adequacy of the current arrangements and we welcome contributions from those who have experience in managing the issue within local authorities. This is useful to us in widening our knowledge of what is happening at a local level and deciding whether we need to undertake any review of this subject, or reissue the departmental guidance document, which is now some eight years old, with a view to making clear to all involved what the roles of local authorities, parents and schools are.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Nash', written in a cursive style.

JOHN NASH