

EHE Deep Dive – summary report for children and young peopleDate: 26th November 2025

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1.0. During the 2024–25 academic year, 527 children in Plymouth were newly registered for Elective Home Education (EHE). This means their parents decided to teach them at home instead of sending them to school. While home education is a legal choice, it often happens when families feel school isn't working for their child. Understanding why this happens and what it means for young people is important.

2.0. The data tells us a lot. Most children who became home educated were in secondary school, and the numbers peaked in Year 10 with 117 cases. Primary school withdrawals were lower, but Year 2 stood out as the most common point for younger children to leave school. Girls were slightly more likely to be home educated than boys, making up 54% of the new registrations. Many of these children had already been struggling with school attendance before being home educated: 123 were severely absent, meaning they attended less than half the time, and 292 were persistently absent, attending less than 90%. A lot of children also had additional needs, 48 had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and 176 needed SEN Support.

3.0. Why do families make this choice? For most, it's not about wanting to teach at home for fun, it's about problems that feel too big to solve in school. In fact, when reasons were recorded, mental health was the most common factor, mentioned in nearly 60% of cases. Other reasons included feeling unhappy with school, wanting a different type of education, and bullying. Although bullying was reported less often this year than before, it still matters because it shows how important feeling safe and supported in school is.

4.0. So, what is Plymouth doing about this? Plymouth City Council has expanded the Elective Home Education Team, which now includes an advisor and three officers. They make sure every new registration goes through safeguarding checks, including looking at social care involvement and SEND needs. Families are contacted quickly, within 10 days, to talk about their decision and check what support might help. Within three months, the team reviews the education being provided at home. If it's not suitable, they work with families to improve it, and if that doesn't work, they can issue a School Attendance Order. In 2024–25, 16 of these orders were issued and meant that the children or young people had to go back to school.

5.0. Even with all this work, there are still challenges. Home education can be expensive and isolating, especially for families on low incomes. Many children who become home educated have multiple vulnerabilities; SEND, low school attendance, and sometimes involvement with social care. Of the 527 children, 253 had been known to Children's Social Care in the last six years, and seven were placed on Child Protection Plans whilst they were home educated. These risks make strong oversight essential.

6.0. The good news is that things are starting to improve. Plymouth launched an Accelerated Action Plan in September 2025, and early signs show fewer new registrations this term compared to last year. Schools are working more closely with families to improve inclusion and attendance, and new tools like predictive data analytics will help identify children at risk earlier. The Plymouth Belonging Framework and extra funding for SEN support are helping schools meet children's

needs before problems escalate. National changes are coming too, a compulsory register for home-educated children will start in 2026, making it easier to keep children safe and supported.

7.0. Reducing EHE is a shared priority across Plymouth. By working together; schools, families, and local area partners, we can make sure every child gets the education and support they need, whether that's in school or at home.