

**Elective Home Education Deep Dive:**  
**New registrations Academic Year 2024/25**

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## **1.0. Introduction**

1.1. This report provides a focused analysis of new Elective Home Education (EHE) registrations in Plymouth during the 2024–25 academic year. The analysis highlights pupil characteristics and key trends within Plymouth, with particular attention to safeguarding and inclusion.

1.2. It aims to contribute to strategic planning and ensure that all children in Plymouth, regardless of educational setting, receive a suitable education and appropriate support. It is within the context of the council's statutory duties under the Education Act 1996 and aligns with the city-wide Place Based Plan, Education Strategy 2026-2029 and SEND Strategy 2023–2026.

## **2.0. What is Home Education?**

2.1. Elective home education (EHE) is a legal and increasingly popular option where parents choose to educate their children outside the formal school system. Families have the right to provide education at home if it is “suitable to the child’s age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs.” This education does not need to follow the national curriculum or be delivered in a formal way. Home education can be motivated by a variety of reasons, including philosophical beliefs and lifestyle choices.

2.2. The Autumn 2024 census identified 111,700 children as being electively home educated in England. 153,300 children were home educated at some point during the 2023–24 academic year. This represents a 21% increase compared to the previous year, reflecting the growing trend in parental choice for home education. 2024/25 census data will not be available until mid-December.

2.3 The Department for Education (DfE) provides statutory guidance to local authorities, most recently updated in April 2019 and revised in August 2024. This guidance outlines the responsibilities of local authorities to identify children being home educated, assess the suitability of the education provided, and intervene where necessary. It also emphasises safeguarding duties and the need for appropriate support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

## **3.0. What we are doing well**

3.1. We remain confident in our arrangements for the oversight and monitoring of the suitability of home education. The recent expansion of the Elective Home Education Team has enabled implementation of recommendations in the Inclusion Review undertaken earlier this year. The EHE Team currently now consists of an EHE Advisor and three EHE Officers. The team have management oversight within the Inclusion, Attendance and Welfare Service.

3.2. An Inclusion Review was undertaken between January and March 2025 led by an Education Improvement Consultant seconded from Dorset Council. Dorset Council is the Sector Led Improvement Partner for Plymouth City Council. The inclusion review focused on areas of strength and development. The purpose was to ensure that the Inclusion Service is efficient and effective in enabling children and young people in the city to have a sense of ‘belonging’ to their school community. We have embedded recommendations from this review into a new EHE Team Safeguarding and Engagement Framework for Electively Home Educated Children. The key objectives within the framework are to:

- Promote positive relationships with EHE families.
- Ensure safeguarding remains central to all EHE interactions.
- Engage with schools, families and services to reduce the number of children becoming EHE when it is not in their best interest.
- Provide clear, accessible information about expectations and support.
- Identify and respond to concerns in a timely and proportionate way.

3.3. The Framework sets engagement strategies and clear and consistent safeguarding actions to:

- Assess risk based on known factors such as known vulnerabilities and agency involvement.
- Collaborate with health, social care, and education partners where appropriate.
- Have clear steps for escalating concerns, including thresholds for referrals to Children's Social Care.
- Maintain accurate records of all contact, concerns, and actions taken.
- Review engagement and safeguarding outcomes regularly.
- Use feedback from families and professionals to improve practice.
- Report patterns or concerns to strategic leads for inclusion and safeguarding.

3.4. In the current academic year so far, the EHE Team have supported 46 children to return to school. Case examples of the work undertaken by the team are captured to ensure evaluation and continuous improvement of practice.

3.5. Following the Rapid Review of Child C, a series of technical papers, local authority protocols and multi-agency working agreements were formally approved by the multi-agency Child Safeguarding Practice Review subgroup of the Plymouth Safeguarding Children's Partnership (PSCP) and rolled out across all agencies. In addition, the resources published by Plymouth City Council set out the process for all schools to notify the Local Authority (LA) when a parent decides to electively home educate. This includes:

- Schools maintained by the LA
- Academies
- Free schools
- Independent schools

3.6. We have requested that all Plymouth schools promptly notify us when a parent is considering elective home education (EHE) for their child. Schools are asked to seek parental consent to keep the child on roll for a period of 10 school days. This allows the EHE Team time to engage with the family, discuss their decision, and ensure they fully understand the significant responsibilities of home education. It also provides a valuable opportunity to explore the family's aspirations for their child's education and to identify any school-related concerns that may be addressed collaboratively. EHE Officers will offer to facilitate a meeting with the school to discuss any barriers to attendance and explore potential support options. If a parent is resolute in their decision not to return their child to the current school, the EHE Officer will offer guidance and support in considering alternative school placements. Parents do not have to engage with this process.

3.7. During the 10-day period, the EHE Officers conduct an individual needs assessment as a priority. In addition to the information provided by the school, EHE team members must complete a thorough triage of information so that we can understand the child or young person's lived experience in relation to their home life and education to date. This involves a review of information held on MRI (Education Database) to include the wider family network, attendance, suspension and SEND information. Checks are also made with Children's Social Care. If the child has a Social Worker, they are notified immediately and joint action is taken to ensure that any decision made regarding a child's education is in their best interests. This will include the Social Worker's view regarding the suitability of the home environment and parental capacity to deliver a full time and efficient education.

3.8. When a parent intends to home educate a child with an EHCP, the 0–25 SEND Team are informed. The school is expected to promptly coordinate an early review of the EHCP before the child is removed from roll. If a child has an EHCP and is registered at a special school, the child must not be removed from the roll of the school without the permission of the local authority.

3.9. Once a child is registered as home educated the home educators are contacted by the EHE Team within 3 months to provide information and evidence of their provision. This is then moderated by an EHE Officer or EHE Advisor who will provide the family with a comprehensive report with recommendations.

3.10. If a child's home education provision is deemed suitable, assurance checks are carried out annually. Where the provision is considered unsuitable, an EHE Officer or Advisor will, in the first instance, offer to meet with the parent again to provide further information, advice, and guidance to help the family improve their provision. If concerns about suitability persist, the child will be recorded as a Child Missing Education (CME). The case will be RAG-rated and added to a dedicated database, which also includes any home educated child open to Children's Social Care. These cases are closely reviewed on a weekly basis to ensure timely support and, where necessary, enforcement action via a School Attendance Order.

3.11. In cases of CME, the case is referred to an Access and Attendance Officer who will try to engage the family to support the child back to school. However, where appropriate, the case will remain open to the EHE Officer to provide this support. Where these attempts are unsuccessful and the child continues to be a CME, appropriate statutory enforcement action is taken to enforce school attendance. In 2024/25 16 School Attendance Orders were issued.

3.12. When parents fail to comply with a School Attendance Order, a legal enforcement process is initiated. However, the Magistrates' Court has limited powers and cannot compel registration or attendance at school. Consequently, parents who breach a School Attendance Order are typically convicted and fined. In these cases, the child remains registered as missing from education, and the Inclusion, Attendance and Welfare team continues to work with the family until the child is enrolled in a school.

#### **4.0. New EHE Registrations in Plymouth - Term One academic year 2025/26**

4.1. In the first term of the 2025/26 academic year, there were 768 children recorded as electively home educated in Plymouth. This represents an increase of 13.4% compared with the same point in 2024 (677).

4.2. This figure includes 150 children who were newly deregistered from school to be home educated during Term One of academic year 2025/26. This represents a reduction of 9% (15 fewer children) in registrations compared to the same period last year which can be seen as a positive step forward. Of these new registrations, 27% (40 children) were primary-aged, which is consistent with previous trends.

4.3. Elective Home Education (EHE) continues to be more prevalent in the secondary phase, particularly at Key Stage 4. However, there are indications that the rate of secondary school aged being withdrawn to home education is falling. In Term One of academic year 2025/26, new registrations fell by 12.6% (16 fewer children) compared with last year's total of 126. This suggests early signs of stabilisation and reduction.

4.4. Of the 150 newly registered EHE children, 14 returned to school during the same period, nine from primary and five from secondary. However, we know that we have more work to do to

support children and families to remain in school. Currently 2.0% of all statutory schools aged children in Plymouth are home educated making us outliers both nationally and regionally.

4.5. Of the 150 children newly registered this term, 38% (48 children) require SEN Support and 4% (6 children) have an EHCP. The highest rates of children with SEND moving into EHE were in KS2 (year 6) and KS4 (years 10 and 11). We know that limited professional oversight can heighten risk for those who are already vulnerable, which is why preventing vulnerable children from being withdrawn into EHE remains a shared priority for schools, Children's Services, and our wider partnership. Of the 150 children, 43% (65) are either currently or previously known to a social worker

## **5.0. Focussed Analysis: New EHE Registrations 2024-2025**

5.1. The data used within this report relates to children and young people who were newly registered as EHE at any point during the Academic Year 2024 – 2025. The specific date range applied is between 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024 and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024. The data has been sourced from Eclipse and MRI (previously known as CAPITA). The data includes children who went back to school during the same period.

## **6.0. Pupil Characteristics: Gender**

6.1. In the academic year 2024–2025, a total of 527 children were newly registered for elective home education. Of this cohort, 45.73% (241) were male and 54.26% (286) were female. While both groups commonly exhibited low school attendance prior to deregistration, the prevalence of severe absence (defined as attendance below 50%) was notably higher among females, with 81 cases (65.85%), compared to 42 males (31.14%). This disparity may indicate differing underlying factors influencing the decision to home educate. The citywide attendance survey was completed by c1500 children and 2200 parents in the Summer Term 2024/25, Female students in Years 9–11 report lower sense of belonging than other year groups. In addition, female students, especially those in Years 9–11, are more likely to experience health and mental health as barriers to their attendance compared to males, and parents/carers of female students report this for their daughters. This suggests that female students may need more targeted physical and mental health support in school or within their communities to improve and sustain school attendance.

6.2. In relation to previous suspensions, 22.96% of the cohort had received one of more suspensions from school. The data set for the period shows only marginal gender differences, with males slightly more represented by 0.9%. The citywide attendance survey highlighted that the way school behaviour policies are experienced has implications for attendance. Both parents /carers and students raised concerns about the implementation of some school behaviour policies, with some strong views expressed about how these were applied in practice. Perceptions of overtly rigid approaches were seen to negatively affect students' experiences of school, their relationships with staff, and, in turn, their attendance. These concerns often related to strict uniform rules, toilet restrictions during class time, punishments or detentions for what was perceived as minor infractions, and, overall, to rules or staff behaviours perceived as inconsistent with the norms and expectations of real-life settings. Such approaches were seen to contribute to disengagement, fear-based environments, and similarly to term-time holidays and attendance-related expectations and communications, to a sense of moral misalignment between schools, students, and parents/carers.

6.3. Analysis of the cohort reveals a slight gender disparity in the identification of SEND. A total of 27 male students have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), representing a 1.4% higher proportion than the 21 female students with EHCPs. Conversely, 90 female students required SEN Support in school, which is 0.76% higher than the 86 male students. These figures suggest nuanced gender trends in the allocation of statutory and non-statutory SEND support. The citywide

attendance survey identified notable proportions of students with barriers to learning, especially those with SEND, are likely to have a relatively lower sense of belonging compared to those without SEND or other additional needs/vulnerabilities, or responsibilities.

6.4. Of the 527 children newly registered as home educated:

- 79 (14.99%) had more than one episode of home education
- <5 (0.75%) had been permanently excluded from school
- 121 (22.96%) have had one or more suspension
- 48 (9.1%) have an EHCP
- 176 (33.39%) require SEN Support.
- 123 (23.33%) were severely absent (<50% attendance) from school in their last academic year of school registration.
- 300 (56.92%) were persistently absent (<90% attendance) from school in their last academic year of school registration.

## **7.0. Ethnicity**

7.1. We have developed our reporting process to capture the ethnicity of all home educated children at the point that they are registered as home educated and achieved 86.33% (455) identification for the newly registered EHE children in the academic year 2024/25.

7.2. 80.26% (423) of the newly registered home educated children identify as white British or white English. There are 70 children for whom we do not know their ethnicity. The data set is taken from the child's previous school information. If the child has never attended a maintained school in Plymouth, the data is unlikely to have been reported to Plymouth City Council. Of the 72 children for whom we have no recorded information about ethnicity, 22 have not been registered at a maintained school in Plymouth and two refused to provide details.

## **8.0. EHE by phase and year group**

8.1. Within the dataset for academic year 2024/25, 109 children were newly registered within the primary phase of education. This represents 20.68% of all new registrations in 2024/25. The data includes three children who were registered as EHE for less than two weeks. Although numbers are lower in the primary phase, they can represent early disengagement from formal schooling. Families choosing EHE at this stage may face challenges reintegrating later, and some children risk missing structured support during formative years.

8.2. The data shows that new EHE registrations from primary schools in academic year 2024/25 were not evenly distributed across year groups. There is a clear upward trend from Reception (nine children) to year 2 children (21 children), which is the peak. This could indicate that parents are more likely to choose home education after the first two years in school and at towards the end of Key Stage 1, possibly due to early experiences or challenges becoming more apparent by year 2. In Key Stage 2, the numbers fluctuate rather than steadily decline. They drop to 18 in year 3 and then fall further to 12 in year 4, suggesting that some families may reconsider EHE or that fewer new families opt for it at this stage. However, the rise to 17 in year 5 and a slight decrease to 15 in year 6 might reflect renewed concerns as children approach transition to secondary school, prompting parents to take them out of mainstream education before that change.

8.3. In terms of gender, there was only a small difference of 2.75% between females (53) and males (54%) in the primary phase.

8.4. Overall, the average number of primary aged children being withdrawn from school to EHE is approximately 15.6, suggesting a moderate level of consistency across most year groups, though

year 2 stands out as a significant outlier. The lowest figure, reception year with nine children, may reflect early years where there is a more flexible approach to curriculum delivery through the Early Years Foundation Stage.

8.5. Strengthening parental engagement during early years to build trust in school systems will be essential to building parental confidence in school. This can be achieved by:

- Providing targeted support for families expressing dissatisfaction with primary education.
- Offering flexible learning options within schools to accommodate diverse needs.
- Implementing early warning systems to identify families at risk of withdrawal.
- Enhancing communication and transition planning between early years and primary stages.

8.6. Within the dataset, 418 children were newly registered within the secondary phase of education. The number of children being withdrawn from school increases steadily throughout secondary education, with a significant spike during the Year 6 to Year 7 transition. In year 7, there were 54 new EHE registrations, representing a 260% increase compared to year 6. This upward trend continues through year 8 (85) and year 9 (99), peaking in year 10 with 117 registrations, the highest count recorded. In Year 11 there were fewer new registrations (63), the overall pattern highlights critical pressure points at transition stages and mid-secondary years, suggesting the need for targeted interventions to support student engagement and retention.

8.7. In terms of gender in the secondary phase, there was a 11.48% difference of between females (233) and males (185). Females were consistently higher in all year groups, with the exception of year 11.

## **9.0. Plymouth City College**

9.1. The Breakwater Centre at Plymouth City College is funded by the Education Skills Funding Agency to provide a 14-16 curriculum for EHE children. The provision provides a range of functional skills and vocational qualifications. The Centre has capacity for 200 students and a number of places available for EHE children varies depending on the courses and hours provided. There are currently 180 Key Stage 4 EHE children accessing the provision. The City College provision consistently operates a waiting list of EHE children wanting to join.

9.2. Of the 527 pupils who were newly registered for Elective Home Education in the academic year 2024- 2025, 173 KS4 children enrolled in the Breakwater Centre, accounting for 96.11% of all newly registered KS4 pupils (180). Within this cohort, 56.06% (97) were females compared to 43.93% (76) males. A more flexible approach to the curriculum delivery in Plymouth mainstream schools may prevent children being withdrawn to home education at KS4. The College has an offer of 50 places which schools can purchase for their students; however, many schools feel that they do not have the funding available to commission long term vocational packages for students. Currently, 21 places have been purchased by schools.

9.3. Of the 173 students who enrolled at the Breakwater Centre, withdrawal to home education reasons were obtained for 86 cases. Mental health was the most frequently cited reason, accounting for 51 cases (59.30% of those with known reasons). Among female pupils, 37 (72.54%) reported mental health as the primary reason for choosing home education. This aligns with the findings of the citywide attendance survey. The next most prevalent reason cited was dissatisfaction with the school accounting for a further 23 (26.74%) of the known reasons.

9.4. Analysis of Breakwater enrolment data shows that the pupils came from 18 Plymouth Secondary Schools. Three secondary schools stood out as having disproportionately high numbers of pupils enrolling at the Breakwater Centre following withdrawal to EHE. Together, these schools

represent 34.1% (59 pupils) of Breakwater enrolments for 2024–2025, indicating a significant concentration among a small group of schools. 21 children within the data came to Plymouth from other local authorities, 2 children had been EHE since primary school.

9.5. Provision at the Breakwater Centre ranges from 3 to 18 hours per week. Within the cohort, 28.73% of students received 10 or more hours of centre-based provision. For students attending less than 16 hours per week, additional work is set for completion at home. This work is monitored and reviewed by Breakwater staff. Parents are responsible for ensuring the work completed so that the overall provision is considered full-time and meets statutory requirements.

9.6. The Home Education Team meets with the Breakwater Centre every month to review attendance and engagement of the home-educated children accessing the provision. This regular monitoring ensures strong oversight and enables timely support for families where there are concerns about children receiving a suitable, full-time education. In most cases, the City College provision successfully meets the needs of attending children. Where engagement is low, the EHE team follows established procedures to assess whether the child is receiving an appropriate and efficient education and to determine any necessary actions to address concerns.

## **10.0. Children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)**

10.1. Children with SEND can face significant barriers to learning and accessing timely support. When education takes place at home, these challenges can sometimes become more complex, as structured interventions, essential for many SEND learners, are harder to replicate consistently outside a school setting. Many home educators create excellent, enriching experiences for their children, offering tailored learning, flexibility, and opportunities to explore interests in ways that mainstream settings may not always allow. These positive experiences can foster confidence and a love of learning. SEND children can often thrive on routine, specialist input, and structured social interaction. For some home educated children, home education may limit access to peer engagement, appropriate support, and suitable learning opportunities which can affect their progress, emotional well-being and social development.

10.2. The Plymouth GATI (Graduated Approach to Inclusion) resource has been co-produced with families and partners across education, health and social care. It includes information and resources to support schools in their work with a specific chapter on collaborating with families. The resource clearly identifies what schools must do support all children and young people. The universal provision described in the GATI is the offer created by schools to ensure they are inclusive by design and consistently work to reduce as many barriers as possible. This allows schools and professionals to then identify where a child is making progress with a consistent universal offer and where extra targeted provision will need be given in a mainstream environment. Implementation and impact of the GATI will be evaluated through applications for targeted funding, feedback from the educational psychology services and specialist teachers via termly consultations, parent surveys and the reduction of numbers of children being withdrawn to home education. The Plymouth GATI can be accessed by parents and has a variety of resources which they may be able to use at home and in their own context.

10.3. Of the 527 newly registered EHE children in the academic year 2024/2025, 31(5.88%) had an EHCP either at the time of registering or within the academic year.

10.4. Of EHCP cohort fewer than five were primary age and deregistered from a Plymouth special school, fewer than five were from an early year's setting, nine were from Plymouth mainstream primary schools and 18 were from Plymouth secondary schools. Fewer than five children had not previously been registered at a school. There are a further 17 children within the dataset who went on to have an EHCP in the academic year 2025/26.



10.5. The Elective Home Education (EHE) Team meets regularly with the 0–25 SEND Team to jointly plan and review provision for children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). This partnership ensures consistent oversight and continuity of casework. Following the expansion of the EHE Team, all members have completed annual review training delivered by the SEND Senior Management Team. Going forward, the EHE Team will take responsibility for annual reviews for any home-educated young person with an EHCP.

10.6. Process Overview:

- The EHE Team will contact families within four weeks of the annual review due date.
- Families will receive the necessary paperwork to complete prior to the review.
- Reviews will be scheduled at a date, time, and location convenient for the family.
- Wherever possible, the EHCP review will coincide with the EHE suitability review to reduce duplication.
- Once the review is completed, the paperwork will be forwarded to the allocated Officer within the SEND Team. The officer will determine whether the EHCP should be amended, maintained, or ceased.

10.7. This process is designed to ensure that reviews for home-educated children are completed promptly and reflect the child's learning environment accurately.

## **11.0. SEN Support**

11.1. A significant proportion of the newly registered EHE cohort in academic year 2024/25, 176 children (33.39%) were identified as requiring SEN Support in school. Of these, 153 children (86.93%) were deregistered from Plymouth secondary schools. We were able to capture reasons for choosing to EHE for 62.42% (329) of the new registrations in 2024/25. For those with known SEN within this data, the main reasons driving the decision to EHE were:

- Poor Mental Health - 50
- Dissatisfaction with the school – 17
- Want of more suitable provision – 13
- Bullying was cited 11 times

11.2. Since the summer term 2025, Targeted Funding has been made available to schools to offer enhanced provision to children requiring SEN Support. Early evaluations have identified the impact of this on a range of inclusion metrics including attendance, suspensions and falling/slowing rates of new registrations to EHE; indicating increased parental confidence and children's needs being met in school.

## **12.0. EHE from Schools and Multi-Academy Trusts**

12.1. 59 Plymouth schools are represented in the dataset for newly registered pupils in 2024 -25. There are an additional 21 'other' registrations which include children who moved into Plymouth during the academic year, for example.

12.2. Five secondary schools had more than 30 children deregister from school to be home educated in academic year 2024/25 and account for 33.20% (175) of all new home education registrations. Four of these schools were also the highest for overall EHE in the 2023-24 academic year. The five schools are situated in areas of Plymouth with the highest rates of deprivation. Four of the five schools identified belong to two Multi-Academy Trusts

### **13.0. The link between school attendance and EHE**

13.1. Poor levels of school attendance and high rates of absence correlate strongly with becoming electively home educated. Of the 527 children for whom we have prior school attendance data, 123 were severely absent (less than 50% attendance) from school and 292 were persistently absent (50 – 90% attendance).

13.2. Within the Primary phase (yrs 0-6), the data shows that, overall, over half (54.12%) of primary age children had attendance rates below 90%. 9.17% (10) of the cohort were severely absent from school and 44.95% (49) were persistently absent.

13.3. Within the Secondary phase, the data shows a greater correlation with EHE with 85.16% of children having attendance rates below 90%; 27.03% (113) children were severely absent and 58.13% (243) were persistently absent.

13.4. The data for the entire cohort shows a strong correlation between severe absence, SEND, suspensions and children's social care involvement. For the severely absent cohort these the risk factors to becoming EHE are evident. This reflects the findings of the citywide attendance survey where the research indicates that notable proportions of students with SEND, are likely to have a relatively lower sense of belonging compared to those without SEND and this impacts on school attendance. Of 123 children who were severely absent from school prior to being home educated:

- 13 have an EHCP
- 41 required SEN Support
- Fewer than five had two episodes of home education the same academic year
- 19 children have had more than one episode of home education to date.
- Fewer than five have had three episodes of home education to date.
- 69 children have been known to Children's Social Care in the last six years.
- 17 children were supported by a Child in Need (CiN) Plan.
- Seven children had a Child Protection Plan.
- 21 children were in receipt of free school meals.
- Fewer than five were recorded as being part of a service family.
- 24 children had received one or more suspension.

13.5. The data shows a strong correlation between persistent absence, number of episodes of home education, previous social care involvement and SEND. For the persistently absent cohort these are risk factors to becoming EHE. Of the 292 children who were persistently absent from school prior being home educated:

- 23 have an EHCP
- 119 required SEN Support
- Eight children had two episodes of home education in the same year.
- 31 children have had two episodes of home education to date.
- Fewer than five have had three episodes of home education to date.
- Fewer than five had four previous episodes of home education to date.
- 150 children have been known to Children's Social Care in the last six years.
- 17 children are currently on a Child in Need Plan.
- Fewer than five children had a Child Protection Plan that was closed prior to becoming EHE.
- Six are recorded as being part of a service family.
- 90 children had received one or more suspension.

- Fewer than five children had been permanently excluded.

13.6. A quality assurance process has been established to gain a deeper understanding of recurring themes within Elective Home Education (EHE) cases. The aim is to share learning across teams and develop preventative strategies that support early identification of risk factors, reducing the likelihood of EHE. This process places particular emphasis on children who have previously had a social worker and those with prior episodes of home education. The quality assurance activity is delivered collaboratively by the EHE Team and the Attendance Support Team through themed dip sampling activities. This themed approach enables a targeted review of cases and the identification of patterns or emerging risks. Insights from these reviews are used to inform practice, strengthen early intervention, and improve outcomes for children and families

13.7. The Extended Role Officer of the Virtual School is conducting regular analysis of those children known to Children's Social Care who have additional barriers to learning. The data includes attendance, part-time timetables, suspensions and SEND information. This is shared with Senior Officers and the Attendance Support Team. Data from this report is used by Access and Attendance Officers to have prompt conversations with schools to agree a joint plans for vulnerable children at risk of become EHE or permanently excluded.

#### **14.0. Reasons for EHE**

14.1. From September 2023, we have improved our recording of reasons having aligned our initial EHE Parent Questionnaire to include the list of reasons prescribed in DfE Return. In every case, parents are contacted, and a home visit is offered to discuss their decision to EHE. The purpose of the visit is to resolve any issues with school, offer advice, guidance and information. During the home visit, the EHE Officer will try always offer the child to opportunity to provide their voice in relation to their school experience and how they feel about being EHE.

14.2. Parents are not legally required to respond to the initial enquiries so it is currently not possible to obtain reasons in every case. However, of the 527 new EHE registrations in academic year 2024/25, we were able to establish the reason in 62.42% (329) of cases.

14.3. Child mental health stands out as a driver for parents electing to home educate. Livewell has developed a Waiting Well resource for families to use for children who require mental health support. This launched in October 2025. Other reasons for parents withdrawing to home educate indicate a lack of parental confidence in how their child is being supported in school.

14.4. Where bullying is identified as a reason for home education, the school is contacted by their allocated Access and Attendance Officer to discuss the matter and to discuss way to support the child and prevent a decision to home educate. In addition, every secondary school has a link Youth Worker who can offer support and undertake direct work with the young person or the alleged perpetrator to prevent EHE. In academic year 2023/24 bullying was cited as a reason for home education 28 times. In academic year 2024/25 it was cited 11 times; this means that there has been a 61% reduction.

14.5. Many parents that the EHE Team speak to feel that they have no other choice but to home educate and have reached the end of what they feel they can tolerate for their child in school. We are working with schools to reduce the rates of children being withdrawn to electively home educate via Termly Targeted Support Meetings. Looking ahead, we are working to support schools with access to automated predictive data analytics, drawing on information from across our One Children's Service. A recent workshop with schools from across all phases of education helped shape the requirements for this project. Using data to predict which children are most likely to be withdrawn from school to be home educated will enable schools to act proactively, offering early

help and targeted support to address underlying issues before they escalate. Through our City Help and Support agenda, we are committed to piloting this approach and rolling it out across all schools in the summer term of 2026.

14.6. In line with the local authority's statutory duties to promote high standards of education, safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and ensure inclusive access to learning; a new Information Sharing Agreement facilitates collaboration between the Plymouth Association of Primary Heads, Special Heads Association Plymouth, Plymouth Leadership Trust (secondary Heads) and MAT CEOs and the local authority through shared, school-level inclusion data. This agreement enables a placed based approach through the joint review of patterns in attendance, suspensions, exclusions, elective home education, in-year mobility, children missing out on education, and Children Missing Education (CME), allowing the partnership to identify strengths, address shared challenges, and take coordinated action. These data insights support more effective commissioning, better targeted early help, and place-based planning that reflects the lived experiences of children, families, and school communities. The strategic use of this data, reviewed regularly across the partnership, is one of the most powerful levers for early help and prevention, enabling earlier and more precise intervention, reducing escalation into statutory services and improving outcomes for vulnerable learners. Aligning this work with SEND sufficiency, alternative provision, and school improvement ensures fairness, strengthens equity, and supports the ambition that every child in Plymouth thrives in education.

#### **15.0. Duration and episodes of EHE**

15.1. Of the 527 children newly registered in 2024/25, 83 returned to school from home education in the same period. Of these 32 were primary age and 51 were secondary.

15.2. 79 (14.99%) of home educated children within the dataset have had more than one episode of home education. Most home educated children are home educated once only.

15.3. Of the 79 children who have been home educated more than once:

- 67 have had two episodes of home education.
- 10 have had three episodes of home education.
- Fewer than five have been home educated four times

15.4. Of the 67 children with two episodes of home education:

- 28.35% (19) are known to require SEN Support.
- Fewer than five have an EHCP.
- 22.38% (15) have had one or more suspensions.
- 62.68% (42) were known to Children's Social Care in the last 6 years.
- Fewer than five have been open to Children's Social Care on a Child Protection Plan

15.5. Of the 10 children with three episodes of home education:

- Seven are known to require SEN Support.
- Fewer than five have received one or more suspension.
- Fewer than five have been permanently excluded
- Fewer than five were known to Children's Social Care in the last 6 years.
- Fewer than five are being supported by a Child In Need Plan

15.6. Fewer than five children have had four or more episodes of home education:

- Fewer than five are known to require SEN Support
- Fewer than five were known to Children's Social Care in the last 6 years.

### **16.0. EHE by Neighbourhood and Locality**

16.1. The correlation between deprivation and EHE is strong with most home educated children coming from neighbourhoods with the highest levels of deprivation. An analysis of the data set reflects the same trend for newly registered EHE children in the Academic Year 2024/25.

16.2. The agreement for sharing of data as described above in 14.5 will enable us to understand more about how place and the role of communities may support more children staying in school.

16.3. In Plymouth we are accelerating our approach to working alongside and within communities and we believe this will further strengthen our understanding of place, contextual safeguarding and ability to support positive relationships between schools and parent / carers. Community based multi-disciplinary are an approach to family help where earliest prevention and support is at the heart of the Families First, social care reforms. Such teams bring together professionals from social care, health, education, and community services to work collaboratively around the needs of the whole family. By operating locally, they offer accessible, relationship-based support that reduces duplication and ensures families receive timely help without navigating multiple services. Each family is supported by a lead practitioner who coordinates a single plan, making interventions more consistent and less fragmented. This community-based approach strengthens connections, promotes trust, and enables practical, tailored solutions that help families thrive and prevent issues from escalating into crisis.

### **17.0 Known to Children's Social Care**

17.1. Of the 527 newly registered home educated children, 253 have been known to Children's Social Care within the last 6 years. It is of note that this does not assume that the child was on a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, the data draws on any recorded contact with Children's Social Care.

17.2. On 13th January 2025, Plymouth's Safeguarding Children's Partnership agreed that if a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan, there are likely risks that mean elective home education is not considered suitable. If a parent informs the school or local authority of their intention to home educate a child on a Child Protection Plan, the school and Children's Social Care will take immediate action to keep the child on the school roll. If a child becomes subject to a Child Protection Plan while being home educated, the Elective Home Education Team will work directly with Children's Social Care and the family to reintegrate the child into school promptly. Any home-educated child who is on a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan will be allocated a key worker from the Home Education Team. The key worker will collaborate with the child's social worker and attend all ICPCs, reviews, and core groups. All casework relating to home-educated children known to Children's Social Care is reviewed weekly to ensure robust oversight for each child

17.3. In the Academic Year 2024-25, seven children registered as EHE were subject to Child Protection Plans:

- Six of these children were secondary age and one was primary age
- Fewer than five Child Protection Plans were under the category of neglect and few than five under the category of emotional abuse

- Fewer than five of the children have an EHCP; and fewer than five required SEN support in school.
- Five children were subject to CIN plans before they were escalated to Child Protection planning.
- Fewer than five are sibling pairs.
- All six children are no longer EHE following the allocation of education provision by the local authority. The sibling pairs have been allocated specialist provision via ACE.
- Fewer than five of the six children have been allocated provision or a school place via School Attendance Orders.

17.4. In the Academic Year 2024-25, 41 newly registered EHE children were supported by Child in Need Plans under the following categories:

- Abuse or neglect – 26
- Family dysfunction – fewer than five
- Child's Disability - Six
- Family in acute distress – fewer than five
- Parental illness/disability – fewer than five

17.5. Of the 41 children:

- Eight children are primary school aged.
- 33 are secondary school aged.
- Five children were home educated for 0-3 months.
- Seven children were educated for 3-6 months.
- 10 children have been home educated for 6-9 months.
- Six children have been home educated for 9 and 12 months.
- 13 children are recorded as requiring SEN Support.
- Seven children have an EHCP.
- 17 children were severely absent (less than 50%). All were secondary school age.
- 17 children were persistently absent (less than 90%). Fewer than five were primary age.

17.6. Fewer than five secondary age pupils had been permanently excluded. Eight children had one or more suspension.

## **18.0. Activity and Next Steps**

18.1. In June 2025, we launched the MAT CEO and LA Strategic Group, which convened in October and agreed to develop a new Education Strategy incorporating citywide metrics on inclusion and belonging. Elective Home Education is prioritised as a strategic focus and led to the development of the new EHE Accelerated Action Plan which has catalysed rapid development of this new strategy.

18.2. Following the launch of the Accelerated Action Plan in September 2025. We have seen a reduction in the rate of children being deregistered from school to home education. Reducing the rate of Elective Home Education (EHE) in Plymouth remains a shared and urgent priority, anchored in our commitment to inclusion, early help, and securing the best possible outcomes for every child. The Accelerated Action Plan was introduced to deliver immediate focus, faster intervention, and strengthened collaboration across the education system, and we have shown that we are now seeing early signs of improvement with significant shift in secondary schools, historically the most affected cohort. Despite these improvements, overall EHE rates in Plymouth remain high at 2.0% of the

school aged population. The implementation of the new Information Sharing Agreement is a critical enabler of the Accelerated Action Plan. Since the launch of the accelerated plan:

- Extraordinary meetings in September and October 2025 brought together over 30 schools and local area partners (including the Integrated Care Board, Multi-Agency Support Team and Community Connections) to address common challenges, at pace.
- New EHE registrations and trends are reported half-termly to school leaders and MAT CEOs, ensuring visibility and accountability.
- The City Help and Prevention agenda is advancing development of a single view of the child, enabling schools to access automated, predictive analytics. This work has been informed by cross-phase school workshops convened on 15 September 2025.
- We have worked closely with the DfE to pilot the national attendance campaign, with our local communication plan aligned to national messaging.
- An EHE implications infographic is being developed for citywide use to help parent / carers understand the realities of home education.
- The Plymouth Belonging Framework was launched at the Head Teacher Conference on 23 October 2025, co-produced with local area partners to strengthen inclusion.
- The Virtual School and Educational Psychology training programme for school leaders and with a focus on inclusion, relational practice and trauma informed responses began delivery in September 2025.
- Targeted funding 3 evaluations show significant early improvement in inclusion and engagement in the schools which have developed their own internal alternative provision, meaning that more children's needs are being met in school.
- Migration for education teams to Eclipse for case recording is on track for launch in December 2025, providing a single view across education and social care and strengthening continuity of support.
- The MRI database is being developed to capture attendance for children in early years settings and will link to the Early Years Provider Agreement; implementation is expected in Spring Term 2026, supporting early identification of emerging needs.
- We are working with our Sector Led Improvement Partner, Wiltshire, to identify further opportunities to enhance early help and prevention in relation to Elective Home Education.
- The Inclusion and EHE Task and Finish Group has merged with the Family Hub EHE multi-agency group, extending the membership to include the voluntary and community sector. The first of the extended meetings is scheduled for the 27th November 2025 and will further advance our work in respect of early help and prevention.
- 60 schools have signed the information sharing agreement and we expect 100% response by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

## **19.0. National Policy**

19.1. Plymouth is working rapidly to implement the Families First reforms, with plans to launch the new way of working by April 2026. These reforms represent a significant shift towards integrated, community-based support for families, aiming to prevent issues from escalating and improve outcomes for children.

19.2. The legislative framework underpinning these reforms is set out in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, which introduces new requirements for multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and supports the development of Family Help Teams. As of 19th November 2025, the Bill has completed its readings in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords and is in its final

stages within the Lords. However, it has not yet received Royal Assent and therefore is not yet law. Full implementation of the reforms will follow once the Bill is enacted.

19.3. The Bill introduces significant changes for children not in school, directly impacting EHE. A compulsory national register for children educated outside school will ensure local authorities have accurate data, with the intention of improving safeguarding and enabling timely support, particularly for families with additional needs. Local authorities will also gain stronger powers to intervene where there are safeguarding concerns or doubts about the suitability of home education. In some cases, consent for home education may be required if risks are identified. These measures aim to balance parental choice with child welfare, ensuring that home-educated children receive appropriate education and remain safe. The Bill also emphasises information sharing across agencies, meaning families who home educate could benefit from more coordinated support, especially for children with SEND. However, it introduces greater accountability, requiring parents to provide evidence of educational provision when requested.

19.4. While respecting the right to home educate, the Bill strengthens oversight and support mechanisms to ensure that all children, whether in school or at home, are safeguarded and have access to a suitable education. Plymouth's proactive approach means we are preparing now for these changes, ensuring that by April 2026, our Family Help model will be strengthened further through closer working with integrated teams in communities.

## **20.0. Ofsted Inspection Framework**

20.1. The new Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF), effective from November 2025, places a much stronger emphasis on inclusion, attendance, and early intervention, elements that can help reduce Elective Home Education (EHE).

20.2. Inclusion is now a standalone inspection category. Inspectors evaluate how well schools identify and support disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, and children known to social care. They will examine curriculum accessibility, adaptation, leadership commitment, and the impact of inclusion across all areas. This incentivises schools to embed inclusive practices.

20.3. Attendance receives dedicated scrutiny under the "Attendance" category, rated using a five-point scale from "Exceptional" to "Urgent Improvement." Inspectors look closely at patterns of absence, punctuality, and the effectiveness of support for persistent absentees. This drives schools to implement proactive engagement strategies before issues escalate.

20.4. By reinforcing inclusion and attendance, the framework promotes earlier identification of families at risk of disengagement. Schools are more accountable for monitoring and supporting vulnerable pupils. When barriers are addressed proactively, families are less likely to resort to home education out of necessity or frustration. Instead, they receive the support they need within the school setting, reducing unnecessary transitions to EHE.

## **21.0. Attendance Baseline Improvement Expectations (ABIEs)**

21.1. From 2026/27, the DfE will introduce ABIEs for mainstream schools, setting minimum year-on-year attendance improvement expectations. For 2025/26, schools have received indicative ABIEs which are calibrated to each school's context, based on previous attendance and comparable schools (nationally), and represent a minimum improvement target. Schools are expected to exceed these baselines wherever possible, aiming to return to or surpass pre-pandemic attendance levels. Those



schools consistently missing their ABIE will be signposted to additional support, such as Attendance and Behaviour Hubs. The Attendance Support Team is working with schools to ensure they are engaged with their indicative ABIEs and encouraging schools to join an Attendance or Behaviour Hub via the DfE's expression of interest process. We continue to support and challenge schools to keep attendance central to their improvement strategies.

## **21.0. Conclusion**

21.1. Elective Home Education in Plymouth remains a complex and evolving issue. Our analysis confirms strong correlations between EHE and persistent absence, SEND, and social care involvement and areas of deprivation, reinforcing the need for early identification and targeted intervention.

21.2. Significant progress has been made through the expansion of the EHE Team, implementation of safeguarding and engagement frameworks, and strengthened collaboration with schools and partners. Early signs of improvement, including a reduction in new registrations this term, demonstrate the impact of the Accelerated Action Plan and citywide commitment to inclusion.

21.3. Looking ahead, Plymouth is preparing for major national reforms. The Families First programme and the forthcoming Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill will introduce a new statutory framework for multi-agency working, Family Help Teams, and stronger oversight of children not in school. These changes will enhance safeguarding, improve support for families, and help reduce moves to home education when these would not be wholly advantageous for the child.

21.4. Reducing EHE remains a shared priority across Plymouth's education system. By embedding inclusive practice, improving attendance, and strengthening early help, we can ensure that every child, whether in school or at home, receives a suitable education and the support they need to thrive.

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