

Outcomes for Electively Home Educated Children

- Wales underperforms educationally compared to the rest of the UK
- Studies from across the world consistently show outcomes from home education to be better than the average for the population
- States where there is registration do not outperform those without and there is some evidence to suggest registration may have a negative effect.
- Welsh home educators are shown in a recent survey to be outperforming their schooled peers

In a recent interview for the BBC in connection with the introduction of a combined English GCSE in England which is not approved for Wales, Leighton Andrews Welsh Minister for education stated:

"We care about high standards in Wales."

"We believe it is important that learners follow the fuller programme of language learning that is covered by GCSE English language."

"What is clear now is that we are no longer comparing like with like when looking at results in Wales and England."

This statement about children's outcomes in exam performance in Wales was somewhat misleading as available statistics refer to results prior to this change. At KS3 it is confirmed that English schools have performed better than Welsh schools consistently for the last decade. GCSE results in Welsh schools are also lower. Does Mr Andrews 'care about high standards in Wales'? Extracts from the Wales statistics may give some indication of the answer:

KEY STAGE 3

The difference in performance was greatest in English, where there was a 6 percentage point difference between England and Wales in 2011. This difference has decreased by 1 percentage point since 2010.

England has outperformed Wales in most years in the last decade, the exception being in Science in 2004 and 2005.

Results for pupils in Wales were lower than all GORs in England for English and for Mathematics. The results for Science put Wales above one English GOR, London. (Wales Stats, SB 52/2012).

50 per cent of pupils aged 15 achieved the level 2 threshold including a GCSE grade A-C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics in 2011, 1 percentage point higher than in 2010. 54 per cent of girls and 46 per cent of boys achieved this level. (Wales stats, SDR 76/2012);*

Comparing this to statistics for England

The overall number of five GCSE (or IGCSE or equivalent) passes at A to C including English and mathematics for all pupils has increased this year by 5.4 percentage points to 58.9 per cent – in state-funded schools there was a 3.1 percentage point rise to 58.2 per cent. (Dept for Education)*

The education minister is not addressing the differences in attainment by working to improve education departments and their provision. Indeed ESTYN found that only 1 of the 10 education departments assessed to be 'adequate' or 'unsatisfactory' had the capacity to improve their rating (which was an 'adequate' capacity with an overall 'unsatisfactory rating'). Rather, WAG is proposing to completely overhaul the education system by introducing new exams and qualifications:

'Perhaps the most crucial question is whether Wales should continue to have much the same exam system as England. One option is to develop the Welsh Baccalaureate into an over-arching compulsory exam, another is to reintroduce the concept of 'matriculation', with pupils having to pass exams in a prescribed range of subjects to qualify. However, unlike the old matriculation system, which ended in 1951, there would be three different levels to cater for pupils with different abilities.'(Powell, N)

Consequently, rather than addressing the inability of education delivery to improve, WAG is proposing to change the standard qualification to one which avoids comparison with England.

Children in Wales are not less intelligent or able than children in England so clearly the fault must lie in the education that they are receiving, not the children themselves. However, some children in Wales are electively home educated (EHE) and international as well as UK based research demonstrates that EHE children have better academic and social outcomes than schooled children on average.

A meta analysis of peer reviewed studies of EHE children in America was undertaken in 2009 and found that:

- *Almost 25% of home school students are enrolled one or more grades above their age-level peers in public and private schools.*
- *Home school student achievement test scores are exceptionally high. The median scores for every subtest at every grade (typically in the 70th to 80th percentile) are well above those of public and Private school students.*

- *On average, home school students in grades 1 to 4 perform one grade level above their age-level public/private school peers on achievement tests. (Rudner L, 1999)*

'The major conclusion was that home school students score, on average, well above national average of public-school students.' (Ray, B, 2000)

'home school families had and continue to have higher scores for both cohesion and adaptability than is true for the general population of families with school age children in more conventional school settings.' (Allie-Carson, J, 1990)

'The results from this study indicate that the home schooled children earned higher social skill standard scores than their conventionally educated peers.

The findings of this research suggest that home schooling does not appear to have any negative effects on the development of proper social skills. To the contrary, the results to this study suggest that the children benefited from an exposure to an education at home as their social skills appear to have been enhanced when compared to their conventionally educated counterparts.' (Francis, David J., & Keith, Timothy Z. (2004)

In a 2003 study of over 7300 adults who were EHE (termed home schooled in the USA), 5000 of whom were educated at home for at least seven years, the following findings were made (Ray, B 2003):

'Over 74% of home-educated adults ages 18–24 have taken college-level courses, compared to 46% of the general United States population'

Further, specific questions asked of those adults elicited the facts that 98.5% had read a book in the previous six months compared to 69% of the general public. Further, 58.9 of the EHE adults described themselves as 'very happy' compared to only 27.6% of the general US population. Thus, in the USA, EHE children become happier adults than do schooled children, they read more and they take more college classes. EHE children in the USA tend to perform above their school enrolled age 'peers' and they score better on average academically, they are socially more adept and more adaptable.

Although little research is available in the UK there is no reason to believe that the results for children here would be any different and research that has been undertaken supports that view. A 2002 study of 419 EHE families in the UK found:

'The results show that 64% of the home-educated Reception aged children scored over 75% on their PIPS Baseline Assessments as opposed to 5.1% of children nationally. The National Literacy Project (Years 1,3,5) assessment results reveal that 80.4% of the home-educated children scored within the top 16% band (of a

normal distribution bell curve), whilst 77.4% of the PIPS Year 2 home-educated cohort scored similarly. Results from the psychosocial instruments confirm the home-educated children were socially adept and without behavioural problems.' (Rothermel,P. 2002)

The study found that parental socio-economic class and education had little influence on the attainments of the children which were attributed as follows:

'Common to all families involved was their flexible approach to education and the high level of parental attention received by the children. Children benefited from the freedom to develop their skills at their own speed. Thus, parental input and commitment, regardless of their socio-economic group and level of education, may be the most important factor in children's development and progress.'

In 1999 a follow up study of EHE adults, who had previously been studied as children, found that none was unemployed and of the twenty interviewed three had degrees from Oxford university (Webb, 1999).

A Wiltshire based home education support group has kept records of children in the group since 2002. They found that the 52 older children involved had achieved 199 formal qualifications in 50 subjects with 69% of those qualifications being GCSE or IGCSE, 13% were A levels and others in Tertiary or performance. 50% of those qualifications were taken under the age of 16 years. 33% of those students achieving performing arts qualifications were awarded distinctions and 96% of other grades were at A* -C. (N.Wilts).

Anecdotal evidence from EHE families confirms that these results hold true for children in Wales. Indeed, I am personally aware of under 16s in Wales currently undertaking degree courses and many others taking GCSE's below the normal age for schooled children. One young man of 14 is a successful young entrepreneur running his own small internet business from his home as a hobby whilst studying. In short, EHE children on average achieve more than schooled children do.

As part of the evidence gathering for the consultation on the WAG proposals a 'snap' survey was taken of EHE children and adults who were EHE to ascertain their outcomes and potential. All children and adults who were involved in the survey were reported as having high levels of personal satisfaction. Interestingly, many parents mention that they had not felt that way prior to EHE.

EHE families also reported that the children had either reached their potential or were clearly reaching their potential. Comments made were very telling:

'Far exceeded the potential the school said he had before he was home educated'
(parent of SEN child)

'Home Ed literally saved his life' (mother of SEN child)

'As they did not read until 10 years and 12 years old it is unlikely they would have achieved their potential had they gone to school' (Mother of university graduate adult children)

'100% happy since being home schooled and also 100% safer now he is not suicidal due to being bullied' (parent of 13 year old)

Many parents do not judge their children's outcomes through academic achievement alone.. However, the families reported academic achievements in the understanding that WAG would find this information more useful than anecdotal evidence alone.

Exam results for EHE children and adults in survey

| Age of child | 10-11 | 12-13 | 14-15 | 16-18 | 19+ | Figures in brackets represent total number of exams passed. (1) One child had gained undergraduate certificates in Maths and science together with passes in University first and second year courses. (2) One child had passed an OU course Children under 10 have not been included in the achievements chart as questions were asked of GCSE, A level and degree level results which would not be appropriate to ask at below that age. However, the majority of the parents of under tens did envisage their children taking some exams in the future. |
|---|------------|------------------|------------|------------------|-------------|---|
| Is the child SEN | Y=0 N=3 | Y=1 N=9 | Y=0 N=4 | Y=1 N=2 | Y=8 N=18 | |
| Number with GCSE passes or equivalent | 2 (7) | 3 (11) | 2 (10) | 3 (13) | 14 (67) | |
| Number with A level passes | 0 | 0 | 1 (3) | 0 | 10 (49) | |
| Number with undergraduate passes | 0 | 1 ⁽¹⁾ | 0 | 1 ⁽²⁾ | 0 | |
| Has the Child taken and passed a degree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18 | |
| Masters | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | |
| PHD | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | |

SUMMARY:

Ages 10-11: 3 children of whom 2 had an average of 3.5 GCSEs each

Ages 12-13: 10 children of whom 3 had an average of 3.67 GCSEs each
And one child had undergraduate qualifications

Ages 14-15: 4 children of whom 2 had an average of 5 GCSEs each
1 child had 3 A levels

Ages 16-18: 3 children who had an average of 4.33 GCSEs each
1 child had an undergraduate course pass.

Age 19+ : 26 children of whom 14 had an average of 4.79 GCSEs each.
10 had an average of 4.9 A level passes each

18 had degrees with 5 having master's degrees and 5 having PhDs.

Only one of the over 19s in the survey had no academic qualifications.

Qualifications included degrees in biology, humanities, fine art, chemistry, architectural design, and law. Post graduate qualifications included law, chemistry, creative writing and dermatology. However, degrees, A levels and GCSEs were not the only qualifications these EHE young people had achieved. Some had attained advanced BTEC or HNC in subjects as diverse as engineering, first aid, joinery, signwriting, art, and guitar. One young person went on to study music at LAMDA.

The results are telling as all of the adults who were EHE that could be contacted took part so despite being a short survey conducted quickly to fit within the consultation time limit, it was not self selecting in a way that would bias the results.

Notwithstanding the above WAG has put forward proposals that LAs in Wales should monitor all EHE families to ensure that the education they are providing is 'suitable'. The proposals announced are clearly intended to be introduced as they include the following statement:

16. It is anticipated that the following issues will be consulted upon in the separate consultation on suitability of education. (WAG, 2012).

The most recent inspections of education departments in Welsh LAs by ESTYN found that of the 22 LAs 10 had education departments that were found to be only 'adequate' or were 'unsatisfactory' overall. None was found to be 'excellent'. In sub categories of grading for children's outcomes 24 of the 44 grades were either 'adequate' or 'unsatisfactory' only one of those 44 sub categories was graded 'excellent' in one LA.

Thus, where LAs have a duty to provide a standard of service that is suitable to families electing to use schools for their children's education, their education departments fail to provide good outcomes for children in Wales on average and schools in Wales fail to provide good outcomes for 50% of children at GCSE level. It is the duty of the parents to provide a suitable education to their children and EHE parents choose to do so themselves, without using LA services. Yet these failing LA departments are proposed as suitable to judge the educational provision of EHE families who are demonstrably achieving better outcomes for their children on average than schooled children.

The proposals seek to ensure that EHE children receive a suitable education by compulsory registration and monitoring of EHE families and children. However, they have paid no regard to experience in other countries where registration and monitoring have been in use.

'The purpose of this study was to determine whether there is a relationship between the college-admissions (or college-aptitude) SAT scores of students who were home schooled and the degree of state regulation of home schooling "The SAT publisher provided to the authors data related to all 6,170 of these students; 2,887 (46.8%) were male and 3,283 (53.2%) were female." "The group data, not individual student's scores, were available and received for each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia." "The SAT scores of home school students from low-, moderate-, and high-regulation states were first compared for states whose degree of regulation had not changed for the 10 years preceding and including the year of SAT testing. In all cases, the states with the highest degree of state regulation had the lowest average SAT scores."'. (Ray, BD, Eagleson & Bruce, K 2008).

America has a considerably higher number of EHE children than Wales, making such research more viable. However, internationally where monitoring has been introduced, no difference has been found between the proportion of EHE families where educational concerns were expressed prior to monitoring and in the years following such monitoring. Monitoring did not change that proportion.

The experience of New Zealand is informative. EHE children were assessed against a standard that required them to demonstrate that they were educated 'at least as regularly and well as in a registered school', in other words that the education was average or above so. In 2008, 644 monitoring assessments were carried out for 6169 'home schooled' students in which only 35 arrangements were found to be below average. Thus 95% of EHE children were being educated at a standard equal to or better than those educated at school. New Zealand made the decision to discontinue monitoring.

In the words of Baroness Morgan during the UK Badman review 'Parents are able, quite rightly, to choose whether they want to educate children at home and a very small number do. I'm sure, the vast majority do a good job'.

Where evidence is available EHE children are outperforming schooled children, with registration making no difference to those performances, other than some regulated children being found to perform less well than those without regulation. There is clearly no justification in terms of outcomes for children to introduce regulation.

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