

# UK home-education law at a glance

A quick comparison across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. General information, not legal advice — always check the official source for your nation.

UK-wide

Reference

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	ENGLAND	WALES	SCOTLAND	N. IRELAND
<b>Legal? Permission to start?</b>	Yes / no permission	Yes / no permission	Yes / no permission	Yes / no permission
<b>Withdraw from a mainstream state school</b>	Written notice; school <b>must</b> remove	Written notice; no consent	<b>Council CONSENT required first</b>	Written notice; immediate
<b>LA-arranged special school</b>	LA consent needed	LA consent needed	Consent rule applies	EA monitors
<b>Compulsory school age</b>	~5 to 16	~5 to 16	5 to 16	<b>4 to 16</b>
<b>Must follow set curriculum?</b>	No	No	No	No

## THE TWO BIG TRAPS

- 1. Scotland:** if your child already attends a public school, you must get the council's consent before withdrawing — doing so without consent is a criminal offence (six exceptions apply).
- 2. Special schools (England & Wales):** a child placed at a special school under LA arrangements can't be removed by letter alone — the LA must consent.

## OFFICIAL SOURCES

England: [gov.uk/home-education](https://gov.uk/home-education) · [legislation.gov.uk](https://legislation.gov.uk) (Education Act 1996 s.7; SI 2024/208). Wales: [gov.wales/elective-home-education-guidance](https://gov.wales/elective-home-education-guidance). Scotland: [gov.scot/home-education-guidance](https://gov.scot/home-education-guidance) (Education (Scotland) Act 1980 ss.30, 35). Northern Ireland: [education-ni.gov.uk](https://education-ni.gov.uk); Education Authority.