

What “suitable education” means

The duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 is open-ended. Here's the test, in plain English.

England · Wales

Reference

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THE DUTY

Parents must secure an “efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs” — “either by regular attendance at school or otherwise” (Education Act 1996, s.7). “Otherwise” is home education.

WHAT THE COURTS HAVE SAID

Efficient = an education that “achieves what it sets out to achieve”. **Suitable** = one that “primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he is a member ... as long as it does not foreclose the child’s options in later years.”

YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO...

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Follow the National Curriculum | <input type="checkbox"/> Mark work or formally assess |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a broad & balanced curriculum | <input type="checkbox"/> Observe school hours, days or terms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have a timetable | <input type="checkbox"/> Have premises to any standard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Set fixed hours | <input type="checkbox"/> Reproduce school-style socialising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Give formal lessons | <input type="checkbox"/> Match five hours a day |

WHAT HELPS SHOW SUITABILITY

Breadth, progress over time, developing literacy and numeracy, and an approach that genuinely suits your child. A learning journal, work samples and a philosophy statement do this well.