

Elective Home Education Annual Report

July 2021 – September 2022

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Introduction

Elective Home Education (EHE) is the term used to describe education provision where parents decide to provide an education otherwise than at school. For these families, the legal duty to ensure an efficient, full-time education suitable to age, aptitude and ability is fulfilled at home. Whilst education is compulsory, school is not and the overall responsibility for a child's education rests with parents. Parallel to this parental duty, local authorities have a statutory duty under s.436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish, so far as it is possible to do so, the identities of children in its area who are not receiving a suitable education. "The caveat in s.436A 'so far as it is possible to do so' should not be interpreted as meaning 'so far as the authority finds it convenient or practical to do so'. It means what it says, and the authority should do whatever is actually possible." (DFE Guidance for Local Authorities, p12, 4.3) This requirement informs the practice of the EHE Service within Sheffield which is tasked with establishing whether parents are fulfilling their educational duties, confirming the suitability of parental provision, and providing information and support.

This annual report provides an overview of the characteristics of children educated at home between September 2021 - July 2022. The data provided refers to the end of year cohort unless reference is made to 'all children'. 'All children' is data relating to all the children that were known to the EHE Service at any point in the academic year. It should be noted that currently there is no legal requirement for parents to register with the local authority.

Headlines 2021-2022 academic year

	Autumn term 2021	Spring term 2022	Summer term 2022
Cohort	493	526	480
New starters	139	100	69
Leavers	140	64	118
Number of students receiving a suitable education	108	129	154
Number of students with unsuitable education	195	192	216
Curriculums awaiting assessment	64	85	39
Number of active school attendance order requests	33	55	89
Students with an EHCP	21	26	26
Students on a CP plan	1	3	2
Students recorded as Child in Need	13	7	9

Cohort characteristics

Starters and leavers

At the start of September 2021 there were 539 children registered with the EHE Service; at the end of July 2022, 480 children were known to be educated at home. Numbers at the end

of the academic year are typically lower due to the removal of Yr. 11 students on the last Friday in June. In total, 802 children were known to the EHE Service at some point in the academic year – around 1% of the school aged population in Sheffield.

Academic year	End of year total	Number of children open to the service during the academic year	Leavers
2018-19	496	730	234
2019-20	449	681	232
2020-21	539	911	372
2021-22	480	802	322

Table 1: End of year totals and overall number of children known to the EHE Service

The disparity between the number of students entering home education and the end of year total reflects the transient nature of this cohort. Nearly 50% of the 322 leavers were registered as home educated for less than an academic year. (Chart 1) Of those students that left within a year, the majority were in receipt of parental provision for less than 3 months. (Chart 2)

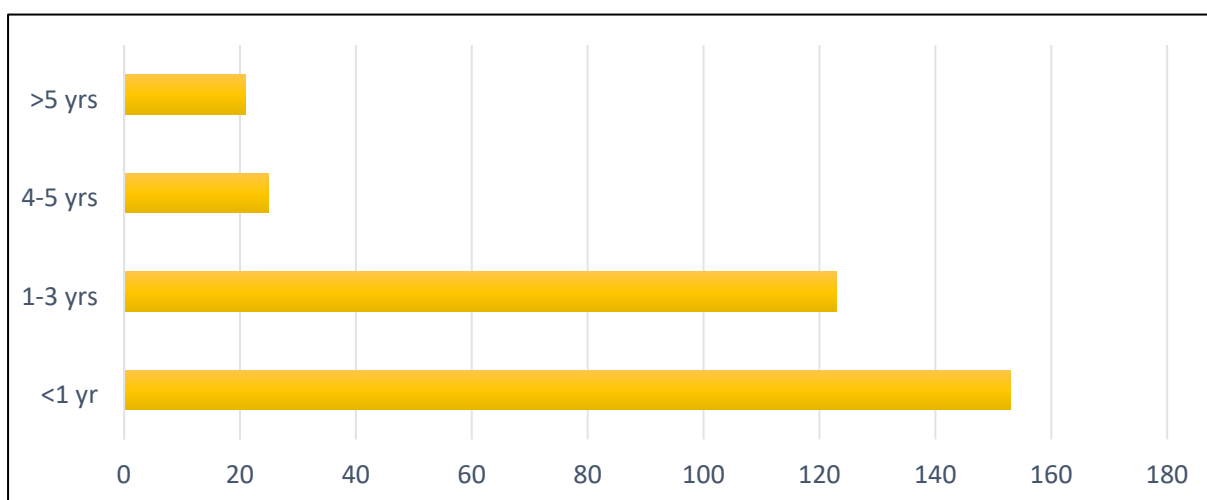


Chart 1: 2021-22 leavers duration of EHE

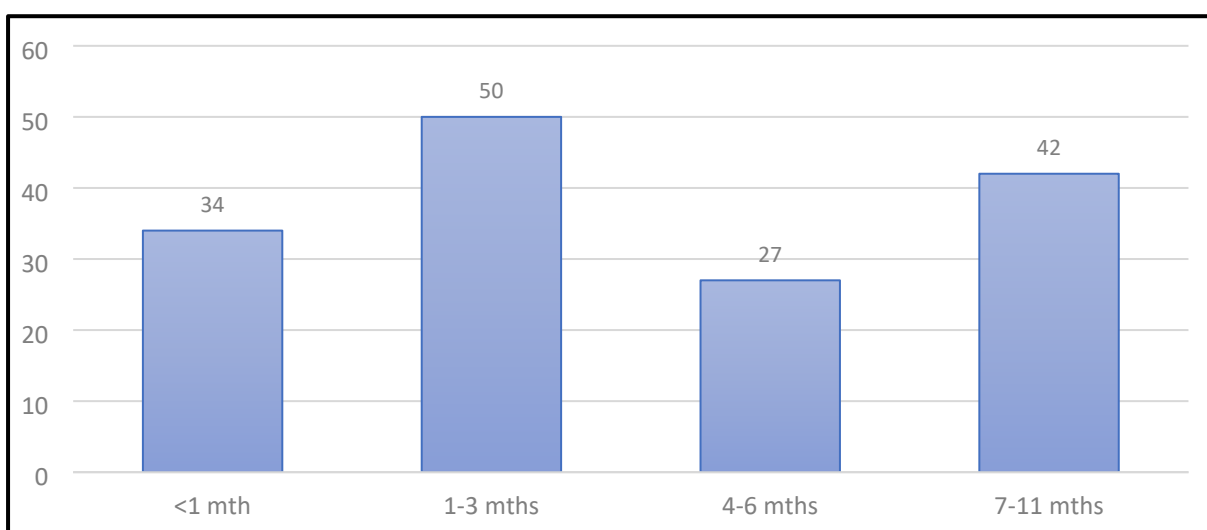


Chart 2: 2021-22 leavers duration of EHE (<1yr breakdown)

The majority of EHE leavers returned to a different school. Sheffield schools have agreed that children who choose to return to school within 12 weeks can return to the same school. As a result of this, 28 students were able to return to their exit school. The EHE Service would like to increase this number to minimise the disruption to learning. However, parental reasons for EHE (Chart 7) reveal a high number of families opt to educate at home whilst waiting for a preferred school. A growing number of children are referred to Children Missing Education (CME). This transfer could take place following an assessment of unsuitable education or a change in parental circumstances. As the child is no longer in receipt of an education, they become pupils not on roll (PNOR) and are supported back into school by the CME team. Parents that would like to return to school and are able to provide a suitable education in the meantime apply direct to admissions and remain registered with the EHE Service until a school place is secured.

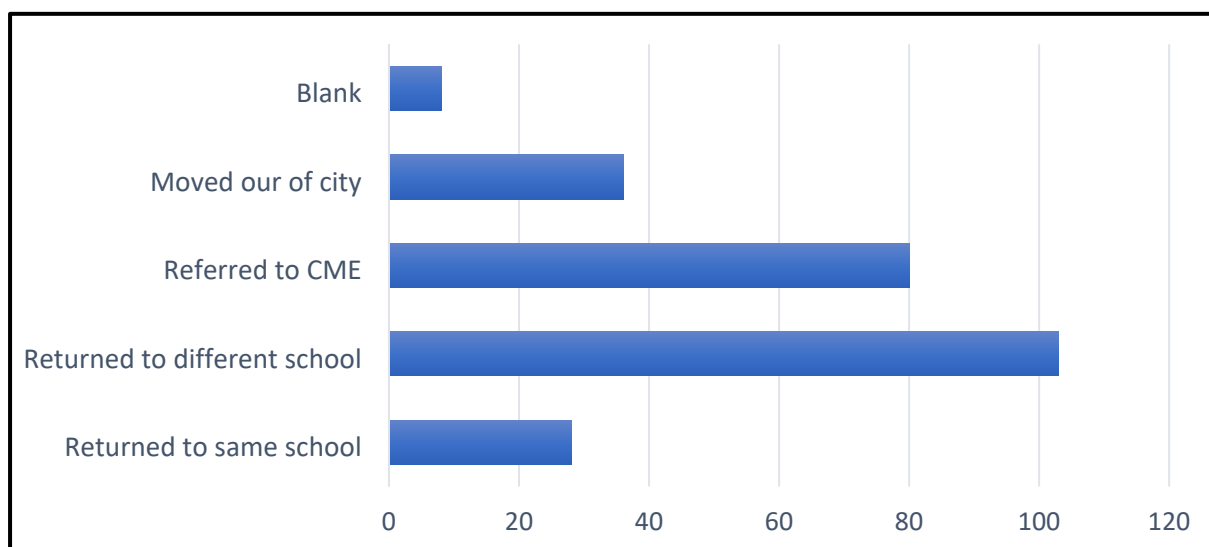


Chart 3: EHE leavers destinations

Whilst most new starters commence EHE in the autumn term, we are starting to see an increase in the number children entering home education at the end of the academic year.

Sep 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Apr 2022	May 2022	Jun 2022	Jul 2022
48	33	46	12	26	30	28	16	24	32	13

Table 2: Monthly breakdown, EHE new starters

New starters were mainly based within Locality C, closely followed by locality B.

Locality A	Locality B	Locality C	Locality D	Locality E	Locality F	Locality G
29	67	69	40	27	43	33

Table 3: Locality breakdown of new starters

Gender and ethnicity

The EHE cohort is predominantly White British. Whereas the gender division is fairly even in the cohort as a whole (females, 245/males, 235), there are now slightly more girls in the total number of children known to the service – 415 females vs 387 males.

SEN status

The vulnerability of the cohort and the complexity of their educational needs is increasing. During the 2021-22 academic year the EHE Service recorded vulnerability solely through child protection plans and child in need status - 2 and 9 respectively by the end of the academic year. However, we recognise that this does not adequately reflect the challenges faced by a growing number of our families and will be using additional tools in 2022-23.

70 of the 308 new starters have special education needs. 5% - slightly higher than the 4% national average - had an education health care plan. 18% of new starters (12.6% national average) received SEN support. 6% (30) of the cohort had an EHCP and 19% (89) received additional support. Chart 4 indicates where these students are distributed within the city.

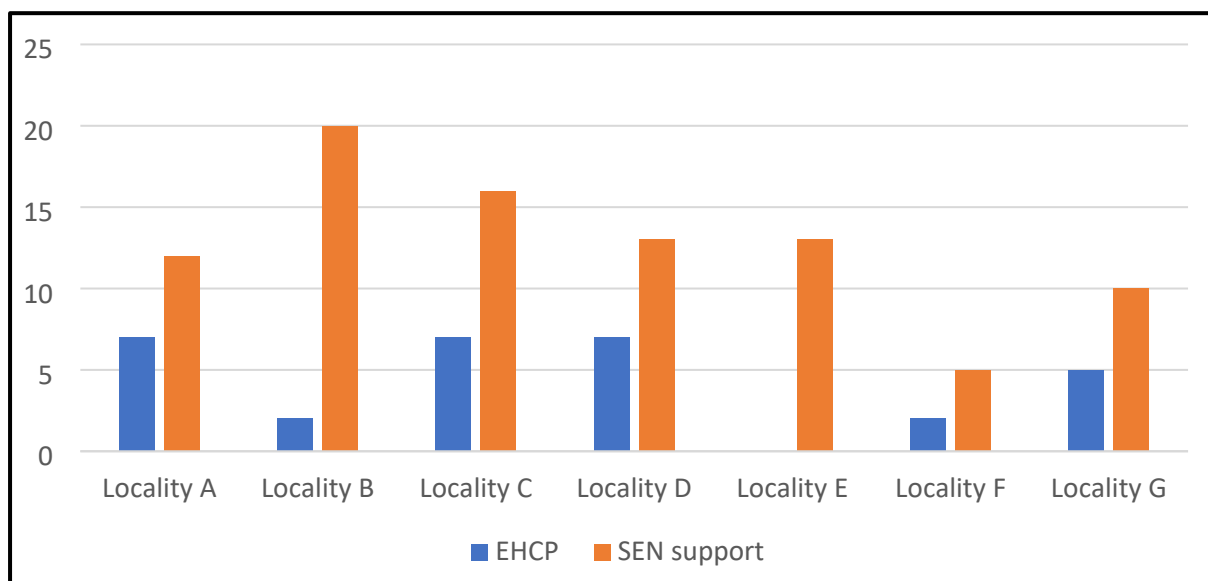


Chart 4: Location of EHE students with SEN

Year groups

The largest proportion of the EHE cohort sits within key stage 3. Yr 7's feature highly in new starter numbers. However, by the end of the academic year students in Yrs. 8, 10 and 11 represent the key national curriculum year groups.

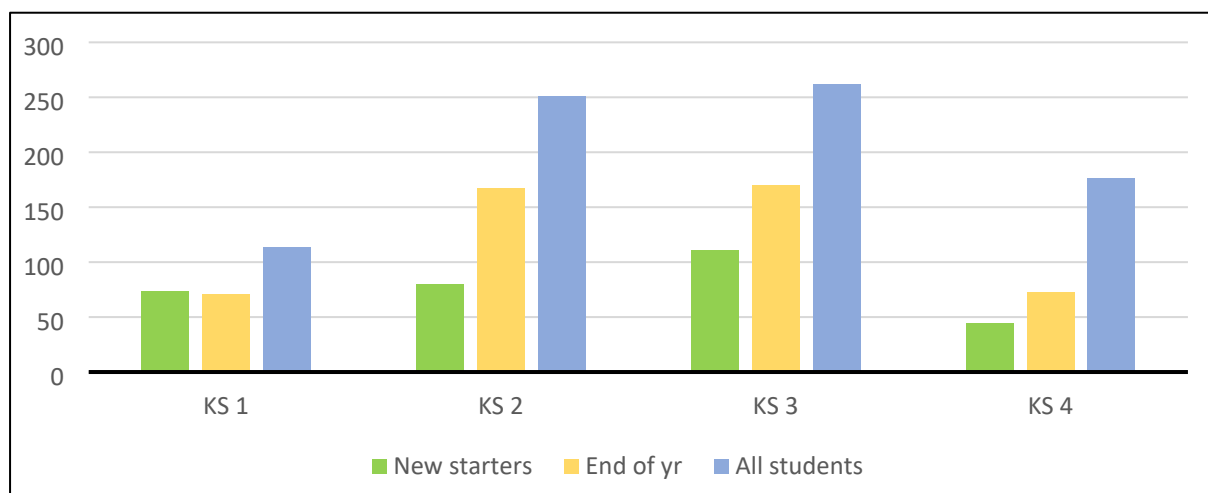


Chart 5: EHE students' key stage breakdown

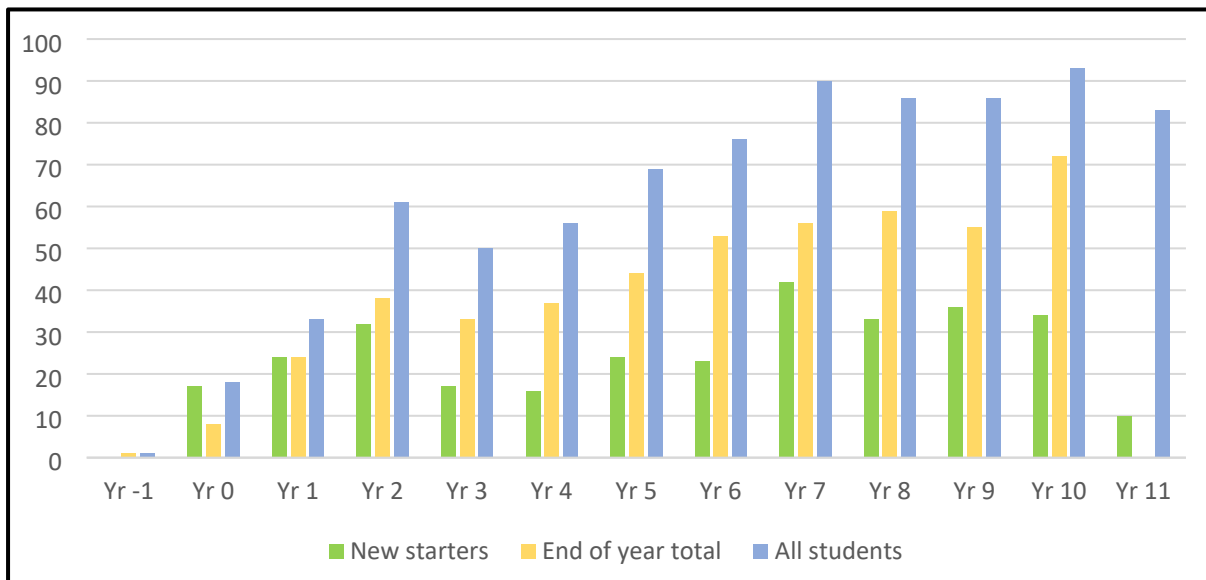


Chart 6: Yr. groups of EHE new starters, end of year cohort and all students

Status of provision

The number of children assessed as receiving a suitable education declined throughout the year. The increase in unsuitable provision appears to be a corollary of the increase in non-elective EHE; this in turn, has increased the number of applications made for school attendance orders (SAO). 80 applications were made for SAO's last year with 9 children attending school as a result. A number of families self-referred to CME or applied direct to admissions. Challenges associated with securing actual school attendance through the SAO process remain. The EHE Service is currently working with partners to improve the outcomes for students in this area and is reviewing the service offer in order to ensure a higher percentage of suitability.

	Sept 2021	July 2022
Suitable	187	154
Unsuitable	186	216
Awaiting assessment	49	39
Awaiting initial curriculum	77	50
Awaiting annual update	17	21

Table 4: Status of provision

Reasons for EHE

The percentage of parents making a positive decision to educate at home continues to decline. Instead, 78% of children registered with the EHE Service at some point in the academic year did so for non-elective reasons. Of those children that were still home educated at the end of the academic year, 93% cited non-elective reasons such as bullying, unmet needs and special educational needs. Stress/anxiety/phobia appeared to be the main reason parents removed their children from school, closely followed by dissatisfaction with school. The inability to secure a place at a preferred school was also a deciding factor.

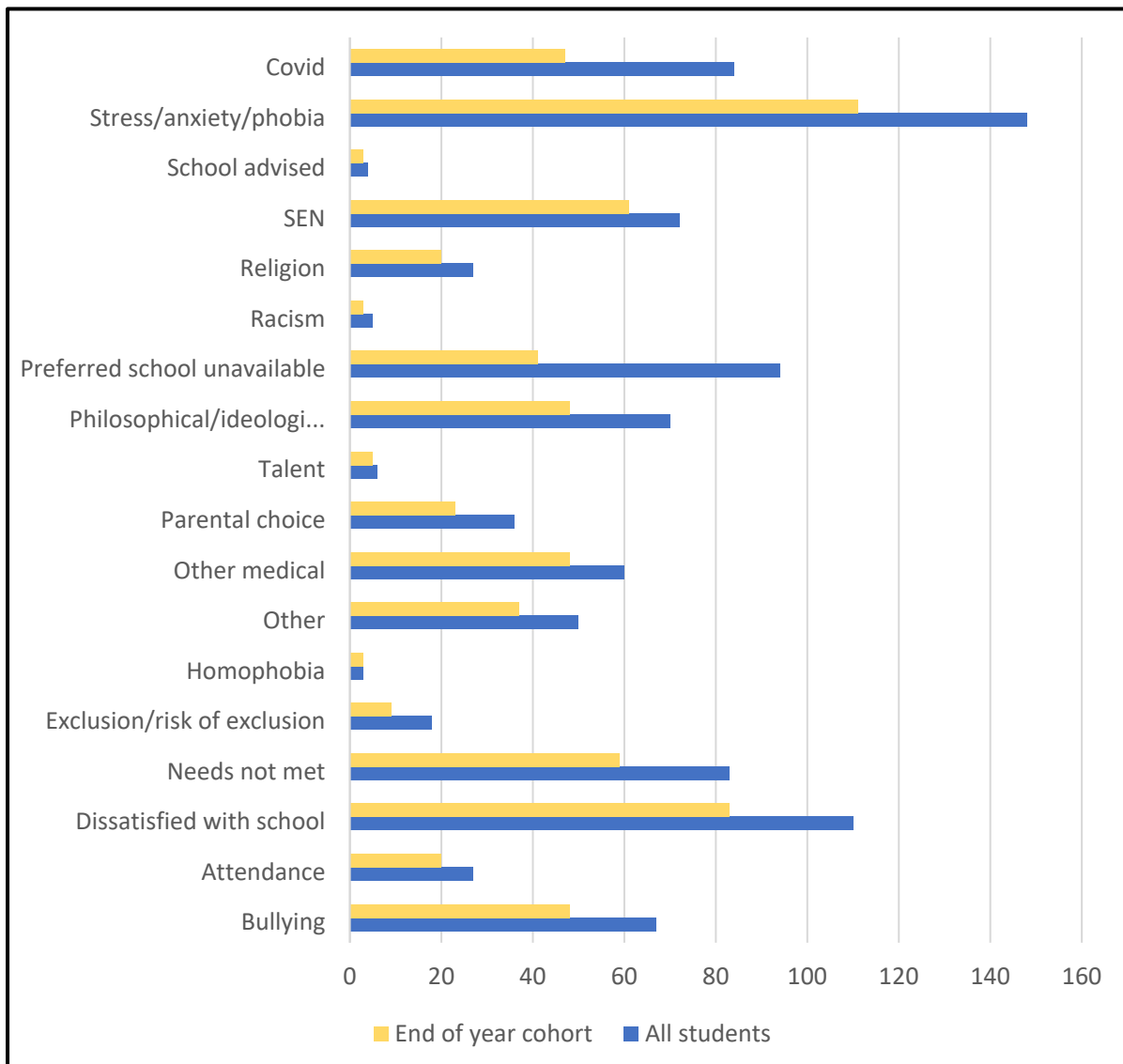


Chart 7: Parental reasons for EHE

Plans for 2022-23

- The proposed Schools Bill will have a significant impact upon the work of the EHE Service and the number of families we may start to engage. Plans are already underway with colleagues in CME and admissions to prepare for possible changes stemming from the requirement to maintain a register of children not in school. This may also lead to changes in how children are recorded which will impact future data returns.
- Reduction in the number of unelected EHE. Plans are being made to develop relations with schools to minimise the incidents of EHE being selected by parents who feel they have 'no other option'. A KPI of reducing the number of unelected EHE has been set.
- Developing data regarding reasons for EHE to include school/provider perceptions.
- Developing tools to record and target vulnerability.
- Review of support offer to address the amount of unsuitable provision. Audit of cases is being completed and consideration given to how the service is best able to support parents to deliver a suitable education.