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# Summary

## About this guidance

This statutory guidance from the Department for Education relates to home-school agreements. This means that governing bodies must have regard to it when fulfilling their duties in respect of home-school agreements and must have clear reasons for departing from it.

## Expiry or review date

This guidance will next be reviewed in December 2013.

## What legislation does this guidance refer to?

- Sections 110 and 111 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998

## Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for:

- Governing bodies of all maintained schools, academies, city technologies colleges and city colleges for the technology of the arts. Local authorities will also have an interest with regard to maintained schools operating within their area.

## Key points

- A home-school agreement is a statement explaining:
  - the school's aims and values;
  - the school's responsibilities towards its pupils who are of compulsory school age;
  - the responsibility of each pupil's parents; and
  - what the school expects of its pupils.
- All maintained schools, academies, city technologies colleges and city colleges for the technology of the arts are required to publish a home-school agreement and associated parental declaration.
- Schools must take reasonable steps to ensure that all registered parents of pupils sign the parental declaration to indicate that they understand and accept the contents of the home-school agreement.

## Home-school agreements – duties for all schools

In line with sections 110 and 111 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 the governing bodies of all maintained schools, academies, city technology colleges and city colleges for the technology of the arts must publish a home-school agreement and associated parental declaration.

The governing body must take reasonable steps to ensure that all registered parents of pupils of compulsory school age sign the parental declaration to indicate that they understand and accept the contents of the agreement.

Schools are not required to seek the signature of a parent where they consider that there are special circumstances relating to the parent or pupil in question that would make it inappropriate to do so.

Schools (or local authorities where they are the admissions authority), must not:

- invite a parent or child to sign the parental declaration before the child has been admitted to the school;
- make the signing of the parental declaration a condition of the child's admission to the school; or
- base a decision about admitting a child to the school on assumptions about whether his or her parents are or are not likely to sign the parental declaration.

A home-school agreement must not include any terms or conditions which would be unlawful or unreasonable, such as requiring parents to make a financial contribution to the school, or refusing to waive any requirement on school uniform in cases where the parent and child cannot comply for religious reasons.

Breaches of the terms of the agreement will not be actionable through the courts. Furthermore, a child must not be excluded from school, or face punishment, as a result of a parent's failure to sign the agreement or abide by their declaration. Furthermore parents should not face any sanction for either not signing the home-school agreement or failing to abide by its requirements.

Schools may also invite any pupil, who they consider to have a sufficient understanding of the home-school agreement as it relates to them, to sign the agreement as an indication that they acknowledge and accept the school's expectations of its pupils.

Schools must review the agreement from time to time. Before adopting or revisiting a home-school agreement, all parents of registered pupils at the school must be consulted.

## Home-school agreement – statutory guidance

Suggested topics to cover in your home-school agreement:

- The ethos of the school
- The importance of, and responsibility for, regular and punctual attendance
- The importance of, and responsibility for, good discipline and behaviour
- What is expected from schools, parents and pupils in relation to homework
- The information schools and parents will give one another.

### The parental declaration

The parental declaration on the form should be clear and easy to understand. Schools need to consider carefully what they are asking parents to sign and ensure that it is reasonable.

### Signing of the agreement

Schools should take reasonable steps to ensure that all 'parents'<sup>1</sup> both within and outside the child's home, giving equal weight to both mothers and fathers, are given the opportunity to indicate that they understand and accept the contents of the home-school agreement, and review the content of the agreement regularly during the time their child is at school.

Where parents have separated it is important that, where possible, both mothers and fathers are given the opportunity to sign a copy of the agreement's parental declaration.

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<sup>1</sup> For the legal definition of parent see section 576 of the Education Act 1996.



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