

UK set to see a rise in parents continuing home education after lockdown

Research has shown that a number of parents are choosing to permanently home school their children after lockdown, suggesting an increase of home educators in 2020.

Educational publisher, Twinkl, has seen a 21% increase in the number of members joining its Home Educators Facebook group since the end of March, when schools across the UK closed as a result of the coronavirus. The group increased from just over 10,000 to 12,145 members.

The educational resource publisher also found that out of a survey of 1,284 parents in its Facebook group, 10% had made the decision to continue home educating their children since lockdown and 7% were now considering it.

Home Education has been on the rise in recent years and according to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator Annual Report published in January, the total number of children being educated at home rose from 52,770 children in March 2018 to 60,544 by the following year.

Alastair Lawson, Home Education Manager at Twinkl, predicts that there will be a surge of new home educators this year, with parents making the decision after experiencing and enjoying home learning with their children during lockdown.

He said: "Millions of dedicated parents across the UK have done an excellent job of educating their children at home in the last few months. I'm not at all surprised to see the results of the survey and the increase we have seen in Home Educators joining the Twinkl



Facebook group. Both suggest that many parents have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to share learning experiences with their children and that the benefits they have seen for their families have encouraged them to continue full time after this experience.

"In January this year, over 8.8 million children were registered across 24,360 schools in the UK, all of whom would have taken part in home learning during the lockdown. Imagine if one child from each of these schools began to be home educated going forward, that doesn't seem like a lot, but actually, the increase would be huge."

At its peak, over 1.5 billion learners were affected by the coronavirus after school closures were implemented in up to 194 countries. This equates to over 91.3% of the total number of students enrolled in education around the world, according to UNESCO.

Bonnie Stephens, is a mother of three children aged 8, 6 and 4 from Scotland. She has decided to start home educating her children from September as lockdown provided the opportunity to explore what it would look like as a family.

A qualified nurse, Bonnie admits that whilst it can be challenging with her children around all the time, she finds that home education is a blessing.

She said: "It gave us a dry run without the pressure of 'oh my goodness, we've just taken our kids out of school and now we have to make this work'. Home education gives us the chance to watch them grow, learn and be captivated by the world around them and you get to see and witness it all first hand. Lockdown has given us the opportunity to have that time with them and has made us want to continue with it."

Bonnie herself was home educated, along with her two brothers, and says that it is something that has always been on her radar.

She continued: "I wouldn't ever push anyone into home education though, because schools are amazing and some children really thrive in that environment. But for families that choose to home educate, you do have an extra benefit of being able to really tailor things around the individual needs of your children. It's just more time with your family, which is lovely, but it's a personal decision."

Parents choose to home educate for many different reasons and it can be the best option in some circumstances, whether it's because of a child's individual needs, family circumstances or geographical location.

Krissie Yates, a full-time mother of two boys aged 11 and 8 years old, will now be home educating full time, saying that the experience of home learning during lockdown resulted in a happier household for the whole family.

She admitted that she had thought about home education in the past but worried about whether she could meet her children's needs. However, lockdown quickly created an opportunity to experience this and decide whether it would be suitable for her family.

Her youngest son has autism and was not coping with mainstream school, hitting out at teachers and other children, and throwing things around the classroom. Krissie describes the 'tremendous' change that she has seen in her son's behaviour in the last few months.

Krissie said: "The school sent work to do and were supportive, but when we tried to do the work it was too advanced and he smashed up a unit because of it. He is behind socially because of his autism, but also academically, so I decided to go on Twinkl and pick things that I knew would interest him but that were at a lower level.

"He is so much happier. His reading has progressed, the amount of meltdowns have cut right down and they're not as long or intense."

The wealth of teaching materials now available has helped make the prospect of home education more accessible, with many companies responding to recent school closures by providing learning materials online.

Twinkl recently created a free bespoke Home Learning Hub, full of daily activities and materials, to support parents, teachers and carers during school closures.

The company has over 664,000 resources and tools available on its website and is used around the world as a trusted provider of high-quality educational materials. In addition, Twinkl has a large and growing range of resources and planning materials written especially to meet the needs and approaches of long term Home Educators. All of the company's resources are created and checked by current and former teachers.

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For more information please contact media@twinkl.co.uk or call 0114 212 3007