

Text of articles published in the Isle of Man Examiner, 5 February 2019, but not available on [their website](#).

Front page article:

Parents 'must' allow assessment of home learners by the department

The bill proposes stronger controls for home learning

Stronger controls on home learning are set to be introduced by the bill.

The latest figures show that 141 children are currently registered as being taught at home, with the numbers of new children registered increasing steadily each year.

Parents are already required to notify the department of plans to home educate but, in what appears to be significant phraseology, the bill states: 'The department must assess the educational development of children in the island receiving home education.'

It adds assessments must be carried out for each child. Also included under the banner of what the department 'must' do are make arrangements for home-educated children to have access to school facilities as it sees appropriate and maintain a register of children registered.

The department 'may' provide advice and information upon request from the parent of a child receiving education.

The parent of a child 'must comply' with any request by the department to provide information for assessment, which may include interviewing the child/parent and assessing work. The bill itself does not state how this would be enforced or what sanctions would be available to any parent who did not comply but any regulations drawn up would require Tynwald approval.

Elsewhere in the bill provision is made for a register of private tutors to be maintained.

All tutors would required to supply a check certificate issued by The Disclosure and Barring Service and information on subjects, age-range of students and proposed fees.

In the commentary accompanying the current consultation, the department says: 'Private tutors often work one-to-one with young people.'

'From the perspective of considering safeguard issues, the Department intends to bring in a register of private tutors with annual confirmation of details.'

Page 3:

Focus on encouraging inclusivity

The new bill aims to underscore the Manx Government's stance on inclusivity in schools banning selection on the grounds of ability.

The 'off-rolling' of certain pupils by some schools in the UK, which is often claimed to be an attempt to bolster attainment levels and push a school up a league table, has come under increasing scrutiny in the UK. The Isle of Man does not have any official league tables.

Only last week, some MHKs argued that the island's schools were more inclusive than their UK counterparts.

The bill's policy on children with additional educational needs (AEN) underscores this, while its shift in terminology to use that phrase as opposed to 'special educational needs' is also a deliberate move.

It states: 'The educational system should include and integrate children and young persons who present challenging behaviour or who have special needs as a result of their mental or physical conditions.'

The draft bill says the department must make regulations covering admission to school, including expulsion.

It adds: 'The regulations must include provision prohibiting schools from using selection criteria for admissions that refer to ability or aptitude.' Elsewhere, in outlining the 'principles of education', the bill emphasises: 'The educational system should support the cultural integrity and identity of the island.'

'The educational system should support the development of a diverse society based on respect.'

EDUCATION BILL

Proposals are set to spark debate

A draft of the long awaited Education Bill was published last week. With a seven week consultation taking place before a final document is prepared for the House of Keys, PAUL SPELLER takes a look at some of the key elements contained within the bill.

The much anticipated Education Bill, to replace a law that dates back to 2001, is likely to generate much debate. Much of the content was flagged up a year ago, after a consultation on the principles to be covered.

The bill itself replicates and updates what is in the 2001 Education Act. But there are significant changes.

In 2001, social media was not a major concern. Today it merits its own specific clause with tough measures.

Home learning comes under the microscope while a general ethos of inclusion is underlined.

In some instances, it is not so much what is stated in the bill that will be the real bone of contention but the wording of any subsequent regulations that are enabled by it.

For instance, the bill says the department 'must make regulations' about term time holidays. The regulations may include provision for when a holiday is a 'reasonable excuse' for absence and when it is not and allow for different circumstances.

But the regulations are likely to, in themselves, become contentious.

Elsewhere, the bill allows that the department may make provision for flexibility in school starting dates depending on the time of year a child was born.

Some things will change by omission.

The Education Council and the Religious Education Advisory Council, for instance, receive no mention, and will cease to exist if the bill becomes law without that changing.

Last week, Education Minister Graham Cregeen said he hoped to be in a position to introduce the bill to the House of Keys by April.

That has already been described as unrealistic, if the Department of Education, Sport and Culture, is genuine about listening to the feedback on the consultation, which runs until March 20.