The Bluebell Federation

East Sussex Local Offer **Attendance | Czone**

ESCC Flexible Schooling Policy Model 2026 - 2027

In this policy 'school' means any school within the Bluebell Federation.

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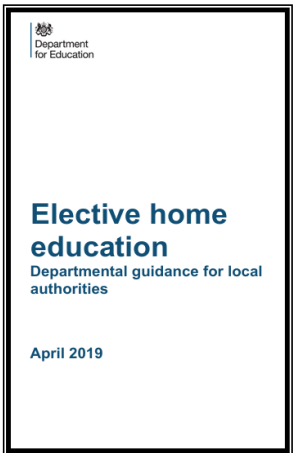
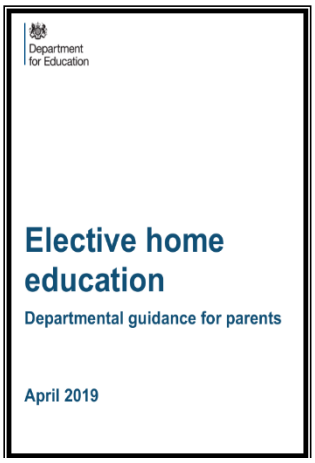
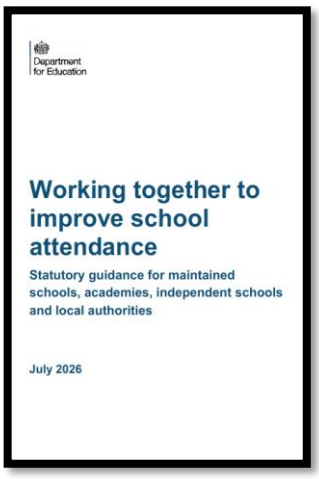
Flexi-schooling Guidance
This policy is based on the statutory DfE guidance Working together to improve school attendance and Elective Home Education guidance for Local Authorities and EHE guidance for parents, and all decisions about flexi-schooling must be made with reference to these documents, outlining statutory responsibilities.







The East Sussex Attendance Support Team (AST) in the Team Around the School and Setting (TASS) are the first point of contact for any queries that Heads of School, governors, parents, pupils, or others may have regarding flexi-schooling.

What is Flexi-Schooling?

- Flexi-schooling is not the same as *Elective Home Education* nor the temporary *reduced timetable* arrangements a school may put in place in exceptional cases to support a child's reintegration back into school.
- Parents or carers who request flexi-attendance are asking for a pattern of provision which will involve both attendance at school and times when the child will receive educational provision at home or at an off-school site. Flexi-schooling is full-time, although the provision may be split. In such arrangements, the child will always remain on the school roll.
- Flexi-schooling is also different from a *part-time timetable* arrangement. Such arrangements are monitored and reviewed with the intention the child be returned to full-time attendance as soon as possible.
- Arrangements for flexi-schooling can only be made at the request of a parent or carer with parental responsibility. This is not an arrangement that can be initiated by the school. It is an individual arrangement between school and the parent.
- Head of School can refuse to agree to flexi-schooling requests and there is no right of appeal against the decision.

Reasons for Choosing Flexi-Schooling

Appendix E outlines examples where flexi-school may be appropriate and considered.

- **Managing Health Conditions:** For children with chronic illnesses or health conditions that make full-time school attendance challenging, flexi-schooling can provide a more manageable educational approach.
- **Combining Specialised Education:** Some families choose flexi-schooling to benefit from specialised subjects or resources available at school while supplementing with tailored home education in other areas.

- **Addressing School Anxiety:** Flexi-schooling can serve as a gentle approach for children experiencing school phobia or refusal, allowing for a gradual reintegration into the school environment.
- **Nurturing Talents and Interests:** This model can provide additional time for children to develop special talents or engage in extracurricular activities, such as sports, music, or arts, which may require intensive training or practice.
- **Facilitating Transitions:** Flexi-schooling can be an effective way to ease children back into formal education following an extended absence, such as due to illness or family circumstances.
- **Cultural or Religious Considerations:** Some families may choose flexi-schooling to incorporate cultural or religious education that may not be fully addressed in a traditional school setting. Whilst this list is not exhaustive, it serves to highlight some of the reasons parents may consider flexi-schooling is a good option for their child's education.

What are Parents' Responsibilities Regarding Education?

The responsibility to ensure that a child receives full-time education whilst he or she is of statutory school age lies with the parent. The Education Act 1996 states; "*that the parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him or her to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his or her age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he or she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise*."

Some parents/carers may decide to provide a suitable education by educating their child at home, rather than seeking to enrol their child at a school. This is known as "*Home Schooling*" or "*Elective Home Education*" and is where the parent/carer takes full responsibility for the education of the child.

Parents/carers have a legal right for their child to be registered at a school or Elective Home Education. There is **not** the same right to flexi-schooling.

Flexi-Schooling and the Law

- Parents are allowed in law to ask schools about possible arrangements for flexi-schooling. However, there is no parental entitlement to flexi-schooling. It is entirely at the discretion of the school's Head of School and the decision to agree it, or not, rests with the Head of School. If a school decides not to agree such an arrangement, there is no formal appeal process, beyond the school's complaint procedures.
- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 sets out the guidance for flexi-schooling, stating that the education provided should be suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have.
- The Department for Education guidance states: *Although children being home-educated are not normally registered at any school, parents sometimes choose to make arrangements for a child to receive part of the total provision at a school - the purpose of this will often be to provide education in specific subjects more easily than is possible at home, and to support socialisation. Such arrangements are sometimes known as 'flexi-schooling'. Schools are under no obligation to agree to such arrangements, but some are happy to do so. When a child of compulsory school age is flexi-schooled, the parents must still ensure that the child receives a suitable full-time education but the element received at school must be taken into account in considering whether that duty is met. Schools are not obliged to accept such arrangements if requested by parents. If they do, then time spent by children being educated at home should be authorised as absence in the usual way and marked in attendance registers accordingly. It is not appropriate to mark this time as 'approved off-site activity' as the school has no*

supervisory role in the child's education at such times and also has no responsibility for the welfare of the child while he or she is at home (para10.8, DfE Guidance for LAs in relation to EHE).

East Sussex County Council Position on Flexi-Schooling

ESCC are working hard across schools and settings to ensure that children attend every day. ESCC believes that the educational, social, and emotional needs of young people are best met in most circumstances, through full time attendance at their school or college. A young person who attends every day - taught by professionals through a balanced curriculum, within a safe, stimulating and socially supportive environment - is most likely to fulfil their potential and go onto become a well-rounded citizen, able to contribute meaningfully to society.

ESCC recognises that some parents may exercise their statutory right to educate their child at home, and this can also be an effective and happy experience for the child that enables them to grow and thrive. Where parents do take up this option, we will support this decision but make all necessary checks to ensure that the child is receiving a safe, enriching educational and personal experience.

Parents also have the right to request that their child, whilst registered at school, only attends for part of the week in a model sometimes referred to as "flexi-schooling". It must be understood that schools are not obliged to accept such arrangements if requested by parents. Furthermore, any time spent by children being educated at home within such an arrangement will be recorded on school records as absence, albeit Authorised absence. During this absence, the school have no supervisory responsibility for the welfare of the child, and full responsibility sits with the parents.

At East Sussex, whilst recognising the right of parents to request such flexible attendance, the LA would not recommend it.

Financial Information for schools

When considering whether to put in Flexi Schooling, Heads of School should consider the following guidance with regards to funding any arrangements under a Flexi Schooling request.

This guidance can be found in the Elective home education: departmental guidance for local authorities

1.3 Although children being home-educated are not normally registered at any school, parents sometimes choose to make arrangements for a child to receive part of the total provision at a school - the purpose of this will often be to provide education in specific subjects more easily than is possible at home. Such arrangements are sometimes known as 'flexi-schooling'. Schools are under no obligation to agree to such arrangements, but some are happy to do so. When a child is flexi-schooled, the parents must still ensure that the child receives a suitable full-time education, but the element received at school must be taken into account in considering whether that duty is met, just as it should be when a child attends other settings on a part-time basis as described above. Bearing that in mind, this guidance applies as much to children who are flexi-schooled as it does to others who are educated at home.

1.4 Parents who choose to educate a child in these ways rather than sending the child to school full-time take on financial responsibility for the cost of doing so, including the cost of any external assistance used such as tutors, parent groups or part-time alternative provision. If the child attends state-funded school or FE college for part of the week, that will have no cost to the parents. Examination costs are also the responsibility of parents if a child does not attend school full-time.

Responsibilities

What Should Parents/Carers Consider?

Parents/carers play a crucial role in the success of a flexi-schooling arrangement.

Their responsibilities include:

- **Educational Provision**: Ensure that the home education provided is suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have.
- **Health and Safety:** Take full responsibility for the child's safety, health, and welfare when they are not on school premises.
- **Attendance**: Ensure the child attends school on the agreed days and inform the school of any absences. *To ensure a child receives a suitable, fulltime education, if a child has unplanned absence (i.e. illness) on a school-attending day, it is expected that a child will be sent in on the next agreed flexi-school day to mitigate further in-school absence*. If the child is unable to attend a home-based session because of illness the parent/carer should inform the school, and this should be reflected in the school's register.
- **Communication:** Maintain open and regular communication with the school, including attending review meetings and providing updates on the child's progress.
- **Costs:** Bear any costs associated with the child's education while they are being home schooled, i.e. resources/tutoring.
- **Socialisation and Interaction:** Make provision for opportunities to socialise and interact with others during flexi-schooling, with particular consideration to peer-interaction, suitable for their age.
- **Compliance**: Adhere to the terms of the flexi-schooling agreement, including any requirements for assessments and 6- weekly reviews with the school, providing evidence of suitable education covered in the prior 6-weeks. The child cannot be disapplied from statutory curriculum or assessment arrangements simply because flexible attendance has been agreed and would be expected to attend school on days that such assessments take place, overriding any flexi-schooling arrangement.

What Should School Consider?

Schools also have a significant role in ensuring the success of a flexi-schooling arrangement.

At The Bluebell Federation, our responsibilities include:

- **Individual Circumstances**: All requests must be considered by the Head of School on their own merits. The Head of School should always consider the best interests of the child, their educational progress and achievement, their safety, safeguarding and welfare, together with the likely impact on the discipline, morale, and organisation of the school.
- **Agreement and Documentation:** Ensure that a formal agreement is in place, detailing the flexi-schooling arrangement, including the pattern of attendance, educational provision, and review schedules (every 6-weeks). Appendix E outlines the flexi-schooling contract.
- **Monitoring and Assessment**: Regularly monitor the child's flexi-schooling progress, maintain records of attendance and attainment, and conduct assessments as needed. The child cannot be disapplied from statutory curriculum or assessment arrangements simply because flexible attendance has been agreed.
- **Safeguarding:** Conduct thorough risk assessments and ensure that safeguarding measures are in place to protect the child's welfare. Appendix A provides further information on safeguarding.
- **Communication:** Maintain regular communication with parents/carers, including scheduling review meetings (every 6-weeks) to discuss the child's progress and evidence of suitable provision, and any necessary adjustments to the arrangement. If the child is unable to attend a home-based session because of illness the parent/carer should inform the school, and this should be reflected in the school's register.
- **Support:** Provide support to parents/carers to facilitate the home education component, including guidance on curriculum and educational materials.
- **Attendance Recording:** Accurately record the child's attendance, marking days not attended as 'C' (authorised absence) and ensuring compliance with attendance regulations.
- **Review and Termination:** Conduct regular reviews of the flexi-schooling arrangement and provide notice if the arrangement needs to be terminated due to non-compliance or concerns about the child's education.
- **Transport:** Where a child attends a school for which they have an entitlement to transport free of charge, this entitlement will not be affected by the flexi-schooling arrangement. However, transport will only be provided at the standard school start/ end times on those days the child attends under the flexi-schooling arrangement.

Flexi-Schooling for Children with an EHCP

- Where a child has an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP) the decision to agree flexi-schooling must be taken in conjunction with the local authority (LA) SEND Team.
- Where flexi-schooling is agreed for a child with an EHCP this should be recorded on the EHCP, and progress monitored through the usual annual review process. The school receives full funding for flexi-schooled pupils and they must be included on all census returns.
- The responsibility for the flexi-school arrangement lies with the school and not the LA. The school will need to work with parents to address any issues which arise.

Flexi-Schooling for Children in Care or with a Social Worker

- Our expectation is that all Children in Care have access to their full educational entitlement, and therefore there should not be an occasion for a corporate parental request for flexi-schooling for a Child in Care unless this is based on the advice of health professionals involved with the child. This would then be regarded as a reduced timetable.
- If a child is on a reduced timetable, we expect this would be a short-term intervention to enable support to be put in place to enable a return to full time education. Heads of School will always seek advice/guidance from the Virtual School prior to any implementation of a reduced or flexible timetable. The same arrangement will apply to any child with a social worker (on a child protection or child-in-need plan).

Flexi-Schooling Agreements

Where flexi-schooling is agreed, a written agreement with the parents/carers will be provided so that expectations and arrangements are clear for both parties.
Such an agreement include:

- Expected pattern of attendance at school.
- Rationale why flexi-schooling arrangement is in the best interests of the pupil.
- Procedures for flexibility around special events which fall outside the normal arrangement.
- How the register will be marked.
- That the school will follow up any unexpected or unexplained absence in the same way as it does for other children.
- Arrangements at times of assessment.
- Details of any perceived SEND needs and associated provision including how any high needs funding, if a child has an EHCP, will be deployed.
- Agreement that if the parent/carer chooses to employ other people to educate their child at home, they will be responsible for making sure that those whom they engage are suitable to have access to children and will be responsible for meeting all costs related to this decision.
- Agreement on who will meet the cost of exam entries. These are the responsibility of the parent, but the school may choose to support with some or all of the costs.
- Arrangements for regular planning and review meetings (every 6-weeks) between parent/carer and school to ensure the child achieves his/her potential and to promote good home/school relationships.
- Clarity about the circumstances under which and with what notice either party can withdraw from the arrangement.
- The arrangements for the resolution of any disputes (usual processes are for disputes to be resolved at the most informal level possible, but ultimately any complaints will need to be considered by the Head of School first and then the Governing Body as set out under the school's complaints procedure).

A sample contract and attendance agreement is available (Appendix B).

How to Request Flexi-Schooling

- Appendix C outlines the Bluebell Federation's flowchart for flexi-schooling processes.
- If having carefully considered all factors a parent/carer wishes to make a request for flexi-schooling, they should contact the Head of School of the child's school and or prospective school if not yet attending the school.
- A parent/carer will need to present a compelling case to the Head of School that flexi-schooling is in the best interests of the child, for example by writing a proposal explaining

the benefits for the child and practical examples of how the arrangement will work between the school and parent/carer.

- The Head of School will review every request for flexi-schooling and respond to the parent with their decision utilising Appendix D (Flexi-School Process Checklist). There is no requirement for the governing body to be involved in this decision and there is no right of appeal beyond the school's own complaints procedures.

Monitoring Flexi-Schooling

- Neither the Local Authority nor the school have a statutory duty to monitor the quality of home education on a routine basis. However, if it appears to the school that parents/carers are not providing a suitable education as agreed between the school and the parent/carer, the school may ask the parent/carer to take remedial action.
- If the parent/carer declines to do so or the school is still concerned about the provision of education at home, the school may withdraw its agreement to the flexi-schooling arrangement. The child would then be required to return to school on a full-time basis whilst they remain registered, or the parent assumes responsibility for arranging their child's education on a full-time basis (i.e. de-registration for the purposes of Elective Home Education). A School Attendance Order would not be appropriate as the child is on the roll of a school. If a child fails to return to full-time attendance the school leaves the absence unauthorised then they should discuss with ESCC's Attendance Support Team (AST) in the Team Around the School and Setting (TASS). The school should also seek the advice of their Attendance Support Officer when concerns arise, as well as the Elective Home Education Officer, allocated social worker, Virtual School Officer or Education, Health and Care Officer, as appropriate.
- It is not appropriate for schools to mark the register as "approved off-site activity" for the time the pupil is being flexi-schooled as the school has no supervisory role in the child's education at such times and has no responsibility for the welfare of the child while he or she is at home.
- Any sessions where the pupil is receiving education at home will be recorded as 'authorised absences C-Code' within the school's register. This will have a negative impact on the overall absence levels of the school in question.
- Schools may be concerned that the use of the 'C' code as an 'authorised absence' will have a detrimental effect on Ofsted inspections. Schools will be required to provide a clear narrative behind weaker attendance data when using the 'C' code, therefore it is important that schools that have flexi-schooled pupils should be ready to discuss with Ofsted inspectors the arrangements they have in place to deal with the requirements of these pupils providing evidence of 6-weekly review meetings. Schools are held to account through inspection for the performance of pupils and that will include any who attend the school as part of a programme of flexi-schooling.

Appendix A: Safeguarding Key Contacts

- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): Consultation via the online portal here
- Referrals into Early Help and Social Care Single Point of Advice: 01323 464222 or Contacting the Single Point of Advice (SPoA) | East Sussex County Council
- Emergency Duty Service (after hours, weekends and public holidays): 01273 335906 or 01273 335905

Appendix B: Sample Contract and Attendance Agreement

The Bluebell Federation Flexi-Schooling

To be filled in by parents/carers

Child's name		**Name of parents/carers**	
Admissions form completed Yes / No			
What are your reasons applying for flex-schooling? Why do you think that it is in the best educational interests of your child?			
How will you organise the learning of your child when absent for flexi-schooling?			

Will you ensure that your child continues to follow the National Curriculum?	
Explain how you will provide appropriate supervision of your child during the flexi-periods of learning at home.	
Will you be able to provide a suitable workspace for your child to work?	

Appendix C: Flexi-Schooling Process Flowchart

Flexi-schooling process

Parent(s) contact the Head of School to discuss and request flexi-schooling.
The Head of School meets with the parent(s) following the request.

Parent(s) submit a formal written flexi-schooling request to the Head of School.
A meeting is arranged with the Head of School.

The Head of School and parent(s) meet to consider the key questions in the Flexi-schooling request checklist/agreement and reach an informed decision.
If flexi-schooling is agreed, monitoring and review arrangements are confirmed.

YES

Using the information provided in the flexi-schooling request, the Head of School **agrees** to the arrangement, acting under the authority of the Governors.

NO

Using the information provided in the flexi-schooling request, the Head of School **does not agree** to the arrangement.
The Head of School formally notifies the parent(s) in writing.
A copy is retained by the school.

The Head of School contacts the Statutory Special Educational Needs Team to discuss the proposed flexi-schooling arrangement and possible outcomes with the SEND caseworker.

End of process
Parents have no right of appeal.

The Head of School arranges a review of the EHCP to consider proposed adjustments to provision and the anticipated benefits of the flexi-schooling arrangement, which can be considered by the Local Authority.

Attach a copy of the Flexi-schooling request checklist/agreement.

The Head of School and parent(s) draw up and sign the Flexi-schooling agreement.
A copy is signed by the Head of School and parent(s), retained by the school and provided to the parent(s).

Agreement to identify:

- Timetable: school and home days
- Length of agreement
- Date of first review

Ending the Flexi-schooling agreement

Parent(s) may end the agreement during the academic year. The end date must be agreed with the Head of School.

Ending the Flexi-schooling agreement

The Head of School may end the arrangement and will notify the parent(s) in writing.
A copy is retained by the school.

Appendix D: Flexi-schooling process checklist

Child's name			**Parent/carer name**		
DOB		**Year Group**		**UPN**	
Date when request received					
Have the parents fully explained the exact details of the flexi-schooling arrangements they have in mind & the reasons behind their request. Are these reasons appropriate?					
Has the request been confirmed by the parents in writing & request stored on the child's file?					
Is the school able to accommodate any concerns expressed by the parents within the parameters of full-time schooling?					
Has the parents request been referred to the Statutory SEND Team?					
Does it appear likely that the request, if approved, would impose an additional workload on members of staff? What is the nature of this additional workload?					
Is the programme/ activity proposed by the parents educational and appropriate? Have the parents produced any documentary evidence to support this? – e.g. – letters from other educational institutions, sporting academies etc?					
Have the parents been made fully aware of their child's current and anticipated level of educational attainment and the potential impact which their request for flexi-schooling might have on this?					
Have the parents been made fully aware of any critical aspects of the curriculum/ assessment/ teaching in school which their child will miss if their child is flexi-schooled?					
Should the school agree to the parents' request, have arrangements for monitoring and review been discussed and agreed? What timescales have been set? Has an initial review date been agreed?					
Have the parents been made aware that the school has the right to withdraw any agreement it might make to flexi-schooling arrangements if it considers that the original intentions and expectations are not being met?					
Should the school be unable to agree to the parents' request, have the reasons for this been fully explained and confirmed in writing and saved on the pupils' file?					
Have the parents been informed that their child will accrue absences (authorised for the periods of time they are flexi-schooled?)					
DECISION					
Approved/Not approved					
Reason/comment					
Signed (Head of School)					
Date					
Original for student file, copy to parents					

Appendix E: Flexi-schooling Home School Agreement

During the period of the flexi-schooling arrangements;

- The pupil may attend special events which take place on the agreed non-school days/ times in consultation with the pastoral leader or other member of school staff.
- Parents retain the same access to records, reports and opportunities to meet with teachers as the other young people who attend school on a full-time basis e.g.: parents' evenings, school reports.

Termination of the flexi-school agreement.

- The timetable will be subject to regular review meeting between parents and the Head of School. This meeting will inform the decision as to whether the flexi-school agreement continues to be in the best interests of the child, and therefore is to continue.
- The parent may terminate the flexi-schooling agreement, at any point during the academic year. The date of return to full time education will be agreed with the Head of School.
- The Head of School may terminate the flexi-school agreement, if they believe that the arrangement is detrimental to the progress and or wellbeing of the child.

Child's name				**Parent/carer name**							
DOB		**Year Group**			**UPN**						
Days /times of attendance of child	Monday AM	Monday PM	Tuesday AM	Tuesday PM	Wednesday AM	Wednesday PM	Thursday AM	Thursday PM	Friday AM	Friday PM	
Date of the start of the flexi-school arrangement											
Date of first formal review											

We fully understand and agree to follow the contract and agree to fully engage with the school to ensure that the best interests of the child are always met.

Head of School Signature	
Parent/Carer Signature(s)	
Date	

Original for student file, copy to parents

Appendix F: Examples of Reasons for Flexi-Schooling

Example 1:
Supporting a Child with Special Talents Background:
A child with exceptional talent in music required time during the school week to attend specialised music lessons and practice sessions. The parents requested a flexi-schooling arrangement to balance formal education with the child's musical development.
Arrangement:

- School Attendance: The child attended school three days a week, focusing on core subjects such as English, Maths, and Science.
- Home Education: On the remaining two days, the child received music lessons and practised at home. The parents ensured that the child also covered other subjects to maintain a balanced education.
- Monitoring: The school and parents held regular meetings to review the child's progress in both school and music. The child's achievements in music were celebrated alongside academic progress.

Example 2:
Reintegration After Illness Background:
A child recovering from a long-term illness needed a gradual reintegration into school to avoid overwhelming them. The parents and school agreed on a flexi-schooling arrangement to support the child's health and education.
Arrangement:

- School Attendance: The child started by attending school for half-days, gradually increasing to full days over several months.
- Home Education: During the afternoons, the child received home education tailored to their pace and health needs. The parents coordinated with the school to ensure continuity in learning.
- Monitoring: The school nurse and teachers closely monitored the child's health and academic progress. Regular meetings were held to adjust the timetable as needed.

Example 3:
Addressing School Phobia Background:
A child experiencing school phobia benefited from a flexi-schooling arrangement to reduce anxiety and build confidence in the school environment.
Arrangement:

- School Attendance: The child attended school for specific subjects and activities they enjoyed, such as art and physical education, which helped build positive associations with school.
- Home Education: The parents provided home education for other subjects, gradually increasing the child's time at school as their confidence grew
- Monitoring: The school counsellor and teachers worked with the parents to support the child's emotional well-being and academic progress. The arrangement was reviewed regularly to ensure it met the child's needs.

Example 4:
Balancing Education and Elite Sports Training Background:
A child with a promising career in sports required time for elite coaching and competitions. The parents requested a flexi-schooling arrangement to balance education and sports training.
Arrangement:

- School Attendance: The child attended school for three days a week, focusing on core academic subjects.

- Home Education: On the remaining days, the child received sports training and home education. The parents ensured that the child kept up with schoolwork and maintained academic standards.
- Monitoring: The school and parents held regular meetings to review the child's academic and sports progress. The school provided flexibility for the child to attend important competitions.