

Parents taking on teach role

Councillor Patricia Bradwell

Executive councillor for children's services

"Because of a greater awareness of elective home education via the Internet, and the support that is available to parents, we are seeing an increasing number of families who choose this option for their children."

Susanna Matthan

Teaches her 10-year-old daughter at their Billingham home

"We teach Asha because we wanted her to have a Christian education. It was more a lifestyle choice than anything and there wouldn't be the same depth at a regular school in terms of spirituality."

Chris Stevens

Teaches three of her children at East Heckington home

"I was just so tired of the system that I decided to teach the children at home. I can give them much more one-on-one attention. Home-educated children can learn more naturally."



AT HOME: Jo Macdonald, from Ruskington, with her three children Jasmine (two), Tyler (seven) Macdonald and Jake Field (nine). Picture: Anna Draper. Picture reference: 8-1703_10.

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More families opt to teach kids at home

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'Every child is different'

JO and Andrew Macdonald, of Larch Close, Ruskington, have three children, Jake (nine), Tyler (seven) and Jasmine (two).

The children have never been to school and the family have often come across opposition.

Mrs Macdonald said: "We've tried to go into cafes on days out during term time and we've been told that we can't go in because our children should be at school or people have approached us and voiced their disapproval."

The family decided not to opt for regular education for their children due to previous jobs causing a lot of international travel.

Mr Macdonald was a general manager for British American Tobacco, which led to the family living in Fiji for

two years.

"We could have been expected to go somewhere where education wasn't so good and we enjoyed the flexibility," said Mrs Macdonald.

Although it is not compulsory for home-educated children to follow a curriculum the Macdonald family have chosen to adopt the Steiner home-schooling curriculum which originates in America.

Both parents are involved in teaching the children but neither have any formal teaching qualifications.

"I don't think home schooling should be viewed as unusual or strange and I have no problem with the education system for those that it works for but every child is different," said Mrs Macdonald.

MORE and more families across Lincolnshire are choosing to educate their children at home, new figures reveal.

The number of children who are now taught at home has risen to 421 - an increase of 332 in the last six years.

And with many people unaware of the law, county children are often being accused of playing truant or their parents acting illegally.

Susanna Matthan (40) and Chris Rogers (43), from Billingham, teach their 10-year-old daughter, Asha, at home.

The family, who are committed Christians, felt that a home education would be more appropriate for their daughter and have never sent her to school.

Mrs Matthan said: "I just wish people were aware of the law and many people just don't understand it. We've taught Asha from home since the beginning and we made the decision a long time before she was born. It was for a

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variety of reasons including spiritual and lifestyle choices.

"There can be an assumption that children who are taught at home aren't out in the wide world but Asha has a large group of friends and does all kind of activities.

"When the time comes for her to do exams we will make sure we find the right route for her to do them."

Parents cite a variety of reasons for choosing to keep their children at home including bullying, lack of support for learning difficulties or ideological reasons.

And with the latest Government figures suggesting around 40,000 children are currently being home-educated in Britain, charity Education Other-

wise is dealing with an increasing amount of enquiries.

Spokesman Ann Newstead said: "We provide a support network across the country and aim to encourage learning outside the school system. Local authority figures may not include families whose children have never gone to school but have been home educated from the start."

Under UK law education is compulsory but schooling is not. If parents choose to teach their child at home the school must be informed but they do not need to ask for permission from a local authority.

Councillor Patricia Bradwell, executive councillor for children's services, said: "Each family will take the decision for home education based upon their own personal circumstances. The local authority provides support and guidance to families."

Something to bang on about

DRUMS will be beating in Lincoln as a group of students show off their skills.

Year 11 students from schools across the county have been

learning about Samba and Japanese Teiko drumming in a three-day workshop 'Keeping the Beat' at Bishop Grosseteste University College. And they will per-

form to show their new-found skills in City Square, Lincoln, from 12.30pm to 1.30pm tomorrow. It is part of an annual programme of summer schools

aimed at introducing school pupils to university life.

Other programmes this year were entitled 'Hands on History' and 'NextSteps 4Study'.