



Phoenix Community College Online

Parent's Guide to Homeschooling GCSEs

Dear Parent, Welcome to Phoenix Community College Parents' Guide to Homeschooling for GCSEs.

Firstly, let me say that Homeschooling can be incredibly successful with the right structure and resources. This guide will walk you through what's required, such as how to plan, how exams work, and how to best support your child academically and emotionally.

1. Understanding GCSEs for Home-Educated Students

Do homeschooled children sit GCSEs?

Yes. Many home-educated students take GCSEs as private (external) candidates.

Is it legally required?

No. GCSEs are not legally required in the UK, but they are often needed for:

- College entry
- Apprenticeships
- Many jobs
- University pathways

Differences from school GCSEs

Home-educated students:

- Do *not* need to follow the National Curriculum.
- Prepare independently or with tutors.
- Must sit exams at an approved exam centre.
- Must work around exam subjects that include coursework or controlled assessments.

2. Choosing GCSE Subjects

Most students take **5–9 GCSEs**, but home-educated students often choose **5–7** for manageability.

Core subjects

These are recommended because most colleges require them:

- **English Language** (often essential)
- **Maths** (essential)

- **Science** (Combined Science or separate Biology, Chemistry, Physics)

Optional subjects

Choose based on interest or future pathway:

- History / Geography
- Business Studies
- Psychology
- Art (difficult for private candidates due to coursework)
- Computer Science (examined centres limited due to requirements)
- Languages
- Sociology
- Religious Studies

Subjects difficult or impossible for private candidates

Because of practical or coursework components:

- Art & Design
- Drama
- Music
- Design & Technology
- Computer Science (requires centre offering practical assessment)

Tip: Many families choose exam boards and subjects specifically because they are accessible for private candidates.

3. Choosing an Exam Board

Main UK GCSE exam boards:

- **AQA**
- **Edexcel (Pearson)**
- **OCR**
- **WJEC / Eduqas**

As a homeschool parent, you can choose *any* exam board.

Before choosing a board:

- Check which exam centres near you accept private candidates.
- Review the specification (curriculum outline).
- Look at past papers and resources available.

4. Finding an Exam Centre

Home-educated students must sit their exams at an approved centre such as:

- Local schools (some accept private candidates)
- Independent schools

- Private exam centres

When to book

Book **6–12 months in advance**, especially for:

- Language speaking exams
- Science practical endorsements (if doing separate sciences)

Costs vary:

- Core subjects: £120–£250 per exam
- Language with speaking: £200–£350
- Private centres sometimes higher

5. Planning Your Child's Study Programme

GCSE timeline

Most families follow a **2-year plan** (Years 10–11), but many home-educated students:

- Start earlier (13–14)
- Spread subjects over several years
- Take exams one or two at a time

Weekly structure

Many home schoolers use:

- 4–5 study days per week
- 1–2 hours per subject per week (you can adjust depending on ability)

Annual structure

Year 1:

- Learn the content
- Light revision
- Begin past papers

Year 2:

- Complete content by December/January
- Revision and exam practice
- Mock exams

6. Resources for Homeschool GCSEs

Textbooks Aligned to Each Exam Board

Each board offers official textbooks covering the full syllabus.

Online courses

Paid options:

- **ICS Learn**
- **Wolsey Hall Oxford**
- **CloudLearn**
- **LearnOnline (NEC)**
- **GCSEPod**

Free/low-cost:

- **BBC Bitesize**
- **Seneca Learning**
- **Oak National Academy**

Tutoring

You can hire tutors for:

- Ongoing teaching
- Specific topics
- Revision
- Exam prep

Past papers

Crucial for exam readiness. Available free from exam board websites.

7. Supporting Your Child Emotionally & Academically

Encouragement without pressure

Home-educated students often thrive because of reduced stress. This helps them to maintain:

- A positive atmosphere
- Open communication
- Realistic expectations

Study skills to teach

- Note-taking
- Time management
- Exam technique
- Organisation

Motivation tips

- Use checklists
- Celebrate milestones

- Build in breaks and rewards
- Create a calm workspace

8. Special Considerations for Homeschooling GCSEs

Students with SEN or Neurodiversity

Home education allows:

- Flexible pacing
- Customised resources
- Reduced anxiety

Exam centres can sometimes provide accommodations such as:

- Extra time
- Rest breaks
- Separate room
- Reader/scribe

You will need medical/educational evidence and must apply early. (*See more information on our Website*)

9. Exam Day Logistics

Parents must:

- Arrange transport to the exam centre
- Ensure correct ID is provided
- Be aware of strict rules on lateness, devices, calculators, etc.

Students often sit:

- 8–12 exam sessions over May–June
- Multiple papers per subject

10. After the Exams

Results - GCSE results are released in mid–late August.

Next steps - Most students move on to:

- A-levels
- Level 2 or 3 vocational courses
- Apprenticeships
- Further homeschooling (A-levels or other qualifications)

To Enrol with Phoenix Community College as a Home-schooled student: Call us: 44+(0)07723 163 974
Email: info@phoenixcommunitycollege.co.uk Visit us: www.phoenixcommunitycollege.co.uk