

Introduction

In this issue, we are sharing the third and final article on the theme of home education and distance learning. This time, as with the previous two articles, the mother has responded to the questions. As before, we hope that this will be helpful and generate responses from others. We would be interested to receive your feedback.

Homeschooling – Family 3

How long have you been home schooling?

I have homeschooled “on and off” - during Covid, times out of our country etc. - for a few years, but have been doing it full-time for the past two and a half years.

How many children do you teach and what ages/levels are they?

We have 4 children who are in year 7, year 5, year 2 and reception. (Reception is the earliest year in the UK).

How do you organise the school day? (in terms of time spent, part of the day etc).

I try to get the main subjects done in the morning as that’s when everyone has the best concentration (myself included!). English, maths and one other subject (science, IT, history or geography,) we usually do in the morning for around 2 and a half hours, and then in the afternoons we do an hour or so of something like art, crafts or nature studies. We also have a team meeting one afternoon.

How do you organise the learning area? Eg, a separate classroom, corner of the living room, etc.

I think it would be ideal to have a separate room for homeschooling, but for now we have a corner in the living room. The boys have a desk each in their room which I am encouraging them to work at more frequently.

What are the main subject areas of learning for your children?

English, maths, science, history, geography, IT, art and nature studies.

What sort of supplies did you need to bring with you? Eg whiteboards, textbooks, art and writing materials, workbooks, craft materials, sports equipment, science equipment.

Most stationery items we can find here, but we needed to bring textbooks and workbooks. We’ve also brought back posters. Some of these things are available here, just not in English!

How do you go about teaching reading, writing and arithmetic/maths?

We have used Wolsey Hall for the past two years for curriculum for English, maths and science for the two older children. For the younger two I'm using a language arts curriculum from The Good and Beautiful. Apart from a few British/American English spelling differences(!) these are really good curricula and we've enjoyed using these. For their maths and handwriting I'm just using workbooks.

How about other subjects, such as PE, music, science??

For PE, the children play a lot of football, badminton and chasing games in our garden with local children! My husband is teaching them piano. For other subjects like geography and history, we've been reading books together. The older two have really enjoyed "The Story of the World" (Bauer) and I've learnt a lot too!

Do you use a distance learning programme or home school package? If so, which one?

I have used Wolsey Hall for curriculum for English, maths and science, as I wanted something that was the same level as if they were in the UK, and I don't have enough time to plan my own things for them. However this school year Wolsey Hall increased their prices a lot so we have been trying Immanuel Online School for my eldest child. We had a few issues getting started and it seemed like it was going to be too much work, but as he got into it (and his typing skills increased!) we found it was manageable. He rather likes being independent and has enjoyed learning this way, but I'm not sure it will work for all my children!

Do you make up the curriculum yourself from the resources available?

Not for English, maths or science, but yes for other subjects. But now our eldest is in year 7 (secondary school) we felt it's important he has more of a similar curriculum to the one that children in the UK would be doing.

Do you do all of the teaching, or is it shared with others?

Other than my husband teaching music I do the rest.

Do your children do any school work online?

With Wolsey Hall, every 4 weeks they sent assignments to a teacher to be marked. There were also videos to watch online, but no "live" lessons. Immanuel Online School is more online-based but we are choosing not to do the live lessons as due to the time difference - they would be late afternoon, which is when local children come round to play, so we feel it wouldn't be good to miss out on that socialising. Plus we also need the extra flexibility for when we go to a conference or visit the UK.

As you trained as a teacher, how does this background help you with home schooling?

I'm only a trained pre-school teacher so it's not been so much help for after they turn 5!!

Please comment on the following aspects:

- **Motivating your children to learn at home**

Keeping lessons not too long, having break times, the children knowing how much we need to cover before a week off etc. The boys are often quite keen to “work ahead” to give themselves some extra free time!

- **Children preferring some subjects and disliking others**

Trying to do that subject first in the day. Or doing part of it and taking a “break” by doing another subject before completing. Using apps for things like practising spelling and times tables.

- **Avoiding interruptions eg visitors**

It can be difficult if I try to home school when the local schools have holidays. Local children often can't understand why they can't come and play all day with our children!

- **Socialising and meeting with other children**

While I was studying language, the children attended an MK school. Now we live too far for them to attend regularly but we still take them once a week, to join with a sports or art lesson, mainly to keep up relationships. They also meet other expat children at our fellowship group and during branch gatherings. It is something we are always aware of, and as they grow older, they will likely need deeper expat friendships, so we will try to facilitate that happening. As our son will be 12 next year, we are planning for him to attend the MK school for 3 days a week and continue homeschooling for the other 2 days.

- **Assessing your children's progress**

With Wolsey Hall they send assignments in which are marked and given feedback, so I can know they are at a suitable level should we need to return to the UK. Sometimes I have informally given them a UK test appropriate for their age (one son in particular rather enjoys these!) to see how they're getting on. However, as I home school more, I'm not so concerned if they are not exactly at the same level or learning the same things as if they were in a UK school. I can see many of the benefits and other experiences they are gaining by being here.

Do you have recommendations or advice for other home schoolers?

Be intentional about their learning, but also relaxed. If they learn something a year or two later than they would in their home country, then that's probably fine!

Compiled by Gill Bryant from one of our mums.

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