

education

otherwise

newsletter 100!

october ~ november

1994

DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the editor, nor of Education Otherwise as a whole.

This newsletter is edited by volunteer members of Education Otherwise and its primary purpose is to provide support and communication between members.

Volunteer editors are always needed - Please contact the Newsletter co-ordinator (see inside back cover).

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A REMINDER TO READERS

The EO Newsletter accepts advertisements, offers of services, articles and notices of social events in good faith and **CANNOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE** for the consequences of responding to any of these. Readers are reminded that sensible caution should be exercised when responding to such.

THE NEXT ISSUE

The deadline for the next issue is **November 1st 1994.**

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NEWSletter

~EDITORIAL~



Well here it is, issue 100! Happy Birthday newsletter. Yes, this is issue 100 despite the last two issues being numbered 98!

Autumn is with us again, 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.' Greetings from deepest Somerset, land of myths and legends. Here King Arthur and his knights still ride by, holy wells abound, abbey ruins and magical tor-hills grace the mystic landscape.

It has been quite an adventure editing the newsletter. My typing fingers (all two of them) are still aching and my brain is still awash with articles, notices, deadlines and proof reading.

The newsletter is so important to us EOers. How good it is to read of others experiences and share our understanding and insights. However, I feel that the newsletter needs to adopt and change in order to be as successful over the next 100 issues.

The regional diary and letters section could be sub-edited on a regular basis (any volunteers?) this would remove a lot of pressure from your poor over-worked editors. Articles could be shorter (3 pages maximum) and more concise, more practical 'How to do' pieces rather than opinions. Regular features, book reviews etc. If you have ideas and opinions on this please write in. I would like to apologise to anyone who sent in material which wasn't published. I have passed all material to the next editor so best of luck.

Lastly, some very serious business. please read the articles on pages 2 and 3 which raise very serious and disturbing issues for EO.

Thanks to the University of Avalon for loan of equipment, especially to Pendragon and Ygraine; to my daughter, Mariella, for taking the time and trouble to produce her book reviews and also for drawings, typing, proof-reading and ideas. Also a big thank-you to my wife, Maritza, for her support. Thanks for letting us edit your newsletter, enjoy it!

Simon Price, Lyonesse, Northfield, Somerton, Soms. TA11 6SJ



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IMPORTANT ! IMPORTANT ! IMPORTANT ! IMPORTANT ! IMPORTANT !

A WARNING TO ALL EO MEMBERS !!!

"Super Hig" has a conviction for indecent assault

A long letter appeared on page 25 of the last news letter under the heading "Help available for people living in the Leeds area - adopt, adapt and improve". It was signed by David D. Higgins ("Super Hig"), of Roundhay , Leeds.

Mr Higgins began his letter with about a page of biographical material, in which he described himself as the founder of , " what later became Youngsters Out Of Doors". He then continued by offering, "to assist anyone within reasonable travelling distance of Leeds... with anything that is within my knowledge". Specifically, he invited parents to contact him, "if they feel that their children might gain something worthwhile from our small adventure group", adding, "I will gladly supply addresses and phone numbers of supportive and satisfied parents if asked, to reassure you." His proposals included both local weekend activities and "Higspeditions" in other parts of the country during school holidays.

In connection with this letter, EO members should be aware that in 1983 Mr Higgins was convicted at Skipton Magistrates' Court on two charges of indecently assaulting children, and was sentenced to two years probation. According to the court register the probation order included the conditions that he should receive psychiatric treatment and should cease involvement in the "Youngsters Out Of Doors" scheme.

This conviction came to light through a front page story in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* of 26th August last. It arose from an incident on the Isle of Man a few days earlier, in which two boys were trapped on a cliff face and had to be rescued by coastguards. They had been on an adventure holiday with Mr Higgins at the time.

We make no further comment on the above. Speaking generally, EO is all too aware of the potential problems faced by an association of its kind, and is currently examining its policies on membership. We accept copy for the newsletter in good faith, but nevertheless **we strongly advise you, before you take up any offer or proposal, to satisfy yourself that it is both genuine and appropriate to your requirements.**

(Rob and Anne Wade, for Education Otherwise Association)

CHILD ABUSE AND EO

Several cases of convictions charges and allegations of child abuse involving EO members have recently come to light.

A paper was prepared for - and discussed at - the York meeting. The discussion included : Ways of protecting children; the rights of parents to expect safety and to have prior knowledge of abusers; the rights of a person who is falsely accused; and the risk of EO being undermined. It was strongly felt that all parents have the primary right and responsibility for educating and empowering their children and giving them information which may help children avoid or resist abuse. Equally it was stressed that EO should have a policy to maintain the safety of children and to dissuade and exclude abusers. The power which abusers have at present is revealed by the Kidscape figure that only 3% of offenders are convicted.

The meeting set up a working group to make an on-going assessment of the situation and a policy was agreed and adopted.

- 1) Immediate suspension of membership - at the directors discretion - if a member is charged with an offence against a child or children.
- 2) Automatic expulsion upon conviction of offences against children.
- 3) Suspension of membership when any criminal proceedings are pending or if there are any disciplinary proceedings in connection with the members employment.
- 4) If the person is acquitted of charges they should remain suspended until they have satisfied the directors that they are not a threat to EO children.

The policy will be included in the new members pack. If you have any views or can contribute to this debate please write to me direct and/or come to the next meeting.

Susan Long, 0245 421496, Essex.

* In connection with these articles your attention is drawn to the "Reminder to all readers" notice inside the front cover of the newsletter.
Editor.

The annual General Meeting of Education Otherwise Association Limited will Take Place at The Youth Hostel, Jesmond Rd, Newcastle upon Tyne, on Saturday 12th November 1994 at 10.00am.

AGENDA

- 1) Quorum
- 2) Apologies
- 3) Minutes of the last meeting
- 4) Matters arising
- 5) Rotation of Directors
- 6) Treasurer's Report including presentation of accounts and acceptance of auditors
- 7) Annual reports from officers of Education Otherwise
 - a) Publications
 - b) Co-ordinators
 - c) Legal Group
 - d) Publicity

* * * * *

Anyone wishing to give a report to the AGM, but is unable to attend, should send a copy to the General Sec. by Nov. 7th 1994 at the latest.

* * * * *

The members' meeting (EGM) will be held at the above venue at 12.00

The agenda for this meeting has not been finalised but will include items on findings of the financial working group, report from the new child protection policy group, various publications which need discussion and approval of the meeting and Parents' Charter situation.

* * * * *

A one day Directors' meeting will be held at the same venue on Sunday November 13th at 10.00 am. This is an open meeting and will discuss mainly the findings of the financial working group, which was set up at the July meeting.

NOTIFICATION OF MEETINGS FOR 1995

The following venues were agreed at the meeting in York in July, keeping in mind accessibility, different areas and costs for members who wish to attend:

A one day at Hatfield Herts. In January 28th '95

A three day weekend at Crowcombe Heathfield, Nr Taunton March 23-25th

A week at Featherstone in Cumbria in September 7-14th '95

This year has been slightly different in having 2 out of 3 meetings as one day events. This is not intended to be the pattern for the future, just a response to exceptional circumstances.

* * * * *

The AGM of Education Otherwise Association Limited will take place at The Youth Hostel, 107 Jesmond Rd, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1NJ. Notification of this meeting is advertised elsewhere in the newsletter, along with details of the EGM (members meeting) and the Directors' meeting on the following day - Sunday 13th November 1994.

If anyone needs accommodation at the Youth Hostel please contact Lawrence Heslop on 081 - 280 - 2570 (warden)

* * * * *

In 1996 - 2 years from now it will be EO's 20th birthday. Do we publish a potted History of..... or The Rise and Fall of.....or hold an exhibition at the Tate. Produce a musical commemoration to our well-loved organisation - Gordon Ramsay's heartfelt rendition of 'I don't wanna go' springs to mind (but after George Michael's hassle with Sony, do we dabble with the music industry?) Anyone with any ideas/inspiration for celebrating this milestone in EO history please share it, direct to me or in the newsletter? General Sec.

* * * * *

HOME-BASED EDUCATION

The enquiries secretaries group have finished work on this new information leaflet. It will be sent out to first time enquirers as part of their information pack. It is written in a question and answer format and addresses the most commonly asked questions about:

- *The Law
- *Who? Why? and how?
- *What do we get when we join EO?
- *Socialisation
- *Bullying
- *School phobia`
- *GCSE examinations and
- *Special educational needs (SEN)

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this document: Sandie Cottee - Rob and Anne Wade - Lesley McKenzie - Pam Stevenson - Mary and Andrew Babbs - Jane Lowe - Sylvia Jeffs - Jude Ashley-Walker - and to the other enquiries people who commented on the various drafts. Finally thanks to Lucy Charlton for getting it printed and distributed. If anyone wants a copy please send an A5 SAE marked "Home-Based Education" to Lucy Charlton, Church Lane Cottages, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire LE8 0FT.

Susan Long, Essex Tel:-0245 421496

THE PARENT'S CHARTER

"You have a **duty** to make sure that your child goes to school until he or she is 16." Thus says the Parent's Charter on p. 9. At the time of the last newsletter deadline EO's solicitor, Peter Liell, had sent "letters before action" to the DfE and to the Welsh Office regarding the above statement, and Don Foster MP had tabled a Parliamentary Question about the mistake. Eric Forth MP replied for the DfE that the Parent's Charter cannot be taken to be a definitive guide to the law, saying that it "cannot take in every exception or reflect all points of detail." He added that there were no plans to issue a *corrigendum* but "if we produce a further updated version of the Charter we shall certainly take your representations on the matter into account." Of course, this is a masterly non-statement as it does not commit the DfE to anything.

By contrast, the Welsh Office replied a week later and assured us that the Charter for Parents in Wales had already been revised and the 1994 edition would continue to take account of the fact that all children are not necessarily educated in schools.

Robin Squire MP replied to Don Foster's question stating that his Rt. Hon. Friend Mr. Patten saw no need to issue a correction or to make a statement about the mistake. The discrepancy between the polite and reasonable reaction of the Welsh Office and the dismissive remarks of the DfE was disturbing and unacceptable. English and Welsh education law are identical, so why should the attitude of the two bodies be so different?

Peter advised that on the strength of the Welsh Office's reply he should send a further letter to the DfE formally notifying them that he had been instructed by us to prepare an application for leave to apply for Judicial Review of the decision (to do nothing) contained in Eric Forth's letter of 5th July. The threat of legal action had an immediate effect, as Forth then replied: "I do however understand the point of concern to your clients, and I am sure that the DfE, no less than the Welsh Office in the light of the concern expressed about their 1991 Charter, would want to find a different - in your eyes more satisfactory - wording for any further editions." He still declined to consider a *corrigendum* slip, saying that he did not consider that it was "the most sensible way forward." Quickly Peter sent another letter asking for an undertaking by 31st August that the next edition would be corrected by the inclusion of a reference, either explicit or implicit, to the legal option of education at home. Eric Forth replied by the deadline, refusing the *corrigendum* slip but tacitly accepting the need for revision: "I am, however, happy to confirm, in the light of your client's concerns, our intention that any future edition of the Parent's Charter in England will include a reference, be it explicit or implicit, to a parent's lawful right to ensure that his child is suitably educated otherwise than at school."

So, the threat of Judicial Review has forced the DfE to provide the written undertaking - which is legally enforceable - that the next Parent's Charter will get the facts right. To obtain the *corrigendum* slip we would have had to apply for Judicial Review, and the DfE's compliance over the correct wording in future editions has removed a large part of our grounds for complaint. There is a danger that, had we gone to Judicial Review over the *corrigendum* and won, it would have been a pyrrhic victory anyway as it would have been a lengthy process. Peter thinks that it is a very good outcome, given the immovability of Governments, and the publicity opportunity has come at the finest time of all - the beginning of the new school year. The whole exercise has raised EO's profile considerably, not least among MPs who have had many letters from EO members about the DfE's blunder.

I'm unable to quote the correspondence fully as I was obliged to fit this on one page. Please contact me if you would like copies, or for further information.

Jane Lowe, 5, Elm Gardens, Welwyn Garden City, Herts. AL8 6RX (0707 335825/390070)

Dear members of Education Otherwise,

The idea of having a permanent Central Office has been rumbling beneath the surface for some time now. As our organisation becomes bigger the demand made on our volunteers can become heavy. We are indebted to all those who are - and were - willing to take on duties on our behalf.

Nearly all of us have had negative experiences of large bureaucracies in the form of our local education authorities and the last thing we need is an embryonic bureaucracy in EO; but how reasonable is it that we place heavy demands on people?

The Babbs family have been more than generous in allowing us to use their address and doing the work of central address. Now they feel that the work is impinging too much on their lives and that the job is too big for one family. Another family cannot be expected to continue this work indefinitely.

I will be asking the next Director's meeting to discuss whether or not we are willing in principle to have a central office with paid members of staff. The next directors meeting is on 13th November. You are invited to write to me before then to give your views.

Brenda Holliday, 10 Charlton Road, Bridge of Allen, Stirling, Scotland, FK9 4DX.



Co-ordinators Update

New acting co-ordinators:

Cumbria- Mary Trimble

Berkshire- Corinne Lindsey

Derbyshire- Kerry and Andy Meek

Areas needing new co-ordinators:

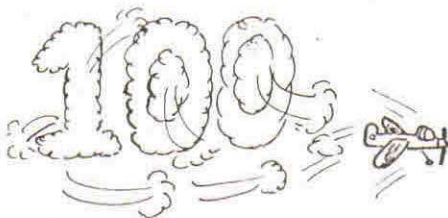
Avon - Dyfed - S. Manchester - Northamptonshire - Nottinghamshire - N. Devon

Tayside - W. Yorkshire

The names of acting co-ordinators will be put to the next national meeting for ratification.

Please let me know soon if you have any doubts.

Isobel & Bob Bogucki



HOUSING

Whatever reservations we may have about the type of society to be found at school, the provision of society for non-schooled children is a serious issue. Many people do their best to meet the social needs of their children by ferrying them to and from the houses of friends and relatives, and meeting in groups at mutually convenient places. However, although this is sometimes well managed by the organized adult, I suspect that most of our children want and need more society than they can get in their present circumstances. Besides, when children have to be brought for miles by adults just to meet and play with a couple of friends, it is a very controlled socialisation, though of course not so much so as at school.

I don't believe it is any coincidence that the person with whom my four-year-old son has most fun, and for whom he asks most frequently, is the girl of around the same age who lives in a flat downstairs. Although it makes me happy to see the pleasure they take in each other's company, I am convinced that the force that draws them to each other is to no small extent determined by geography. The fact that they live so close to each other means that they have a large degree of control over when, how often, for how long, and to an extent where - upstairs, downstairs or in the garden - they see each other, leading to a more natural and complete relationship than is often possible.

For a long time here in the so-called rich countries of the world we have been moving into ever smaller, more private spaces with increasing isolation from one another. Even the street in front of where we live is no longer conducive to community interaction, owing to the presence of cars and other dangers and discomforts. Far from satisfying our social needs, the present trend increases our dependency on artificial means of communication such as televisions, cars and telephones, and the ensuing pressures on individuals and families are well documented.

Thus there are many reasons for seeking alternative living arrangements, to move away from the insular model which is now almost universal. Having investigated some alternatives, I am particularly impressed by a housing model that originated in Denmark known as co-housing, which I think is particularly suitable to families who are not sending their children to school (though not only these), but is also a desirable solution to the problem of isolation for households of all sizes and types. Co-housing strikes a balance between privacy and community which has been missing in our society for some time.

Every aspect of a co-housing development is negotiable at the planning stage, which can take upwards of a year, and during which time participants can meet however often they wish, to discuss details and arrange matters. In general, the most important feature of co-housing is the emphasis on common areas, including a garden and a large indoor area, around which individual dwellings are situated, all of which are entirely self-contained, and similar to ordinary dwellings in all respects but on a smaller scale. This affords people the opportunity to

participate in such joint activities as an evening meal if they wish, while maintaining the possibility of complete privacy if so desired. There is no obligation on the part of anybody in a co-housing set-up to involve themselves in collective activities or to do anything that they would not wish to do were they living in an ordinary, independent house or flat, but the structures exist to enable people to be just as sociable as they want, and likewise for their children.

People of all ages live in co-housing arrangements, and although it has traditionally been the preserve of the professional middle classes, this should not be necessary given that there are government grants available for such projects as housing associations. Today, according to McCamant and Durrett in their book "Cohousing", cohousing is cross-generational, involving single people, childless couples, one- and two-parent families and old people. Those wishing to own their own property generally buy their individual dwelling as well as a proportion of joint-owned property. There is no reason why co-housing should be any more (and indeed it is usually less) expensive than other types of housing.

Groups can vary in size depending on the needs and wishes of their inhabitants, but interviews with co-housing communities in Denmark have suggested that there is an optimal number of dwellings so that the group remains cohesive while giving residents enough space so as to maintain a distance when they want to.

It is within the realms of possibility to create an alternative to modern housing trends. We can arrange a compromise between our need for privacy and our need, and our children's need, for closer community. The only prerequisites are a desire for it to work and a willingness to make the effort necessary to bring it about.

Without the need for any commitment, I would like to hear from people, whatever their individual situation or aspirations, who think that they might be interested in co-housing. Write to: Barry O'Donovan, Holly Lodge, 7 Wisteria Road, London SE13 5HW.

- REGIONAL DIARY -

AVON:

Poppy Green is acting as stand in co-ordinator her phone number is (0272) 735091

BATH:

Andy Hannen & Joanna Ball are EO co-ordinators for Bath.

Tel : 0225 335118 for General Enquires.

'**Bath Hedgehogs Home Education Group**' meets regularly on **Tuesdays** and **Thursdays**.

Tel Jill & Drew Leith, Bath 481569 or Joanne Ball & Andrew Hannen, 0225 335118.

BRISTOL :

The Bristol group has weekly workshops plus skating and swimming sessions. Contact Kathy Nott on (0272) 668265 for details.

BEDFORDSHIRE :

Members from all areas welcome to attend; check before each event; bad weather may cancel; telephone if you need to know more: June McDonald - Bedford 0234 341375;

(For Bucks. events - Joyce Moore 0908 562451)

Mon. 3rd Oct. 2-4pm. Fourth of 6 pottery sessions arranged at **Park Farm Studios nr. Bletsoe Bedford**. there will be another course after the mid-term break at a cost of £2 per child per session. numbers are restricted but further courses can be arranged. Wheels, clay firing, painting, glazing, etc. included.

Wed 5th Oct. 2.00pm visit from Ray, (who runs a bird sanctuary) and his 5 barn owls for talk and viewing at **Russell Park Baptist Church Hall, Denmark Street, Bedford**. Excellent talk plus Q & A session and a chance for all to stroke and hold a barn owl at the end. Bring a camera ! cost £1.50 per head to reach me no later than Fri. 30th September please.

Thurs 13th Oct. 2.00pm. Victorian costume session at **Cecil Higgins Art Gallery in Bedford**. Using children as models, the education officer will give a talk about Victorian clothing. Parents can photograph their children (4-12) in the beautiful replica costumes. 50p per head.

Wed 19th Oct. 2-4pm Ice- skating with Bucks. EOers at '**Blade Runner**' in **Milton Keynes**. Cost £3 depending on numbers.

Mon 31st Oct. 2-4pm, 2nd session of pottery course, see Monday 3rd October for details (also on 7th,14th,21st, 28th and 5th December)

Thurs 3rd Nov. 1.45pm Session at '**Activity world**' in '**Rollers**', **Denbeigh Centre, Bletchley**, with Bucks. EOers. Party rate for child £1.50, adult 60p.

Fri 11th Nov. Swimming session at **Robinson Pool, Bedford**. Meet in entrance hall at 1.30pm for party rate. Non pate £1.70 for adult; 85p for child.

Fri 18th Nov. Roller skating session at '**Rollers**' in **Denbeigh Centre, Bletchley** with Bucks. EOers. 2.00pm.

Thurs 24th Nov. 2pm Brass Rubbing session at **Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford**. Numbers restricted to 10, age 7 +, or accompanied by adult if under 7. cost £2 per child to cover paper for about 4 rubbings per child.

Wed 30th Nov. 1.30 pm **Swimming session at Oasis Beach Pool, Bedford**. Wave machine, Slides, Jacuzzi pools, etc. Cost Adult £1.80, Child £1.30, Family £4.90.

BERKSHIRE:

Ice-skating at the John Nike rink, just outside Bracknell and Wokingham, on **Mondays from October 3rd**. Meet at 1pm for group entry.

£1.45 per person (inc. skate hire). Pleasant restaurant with hot drinks and food available.

GERMAN CONVERSATION GROUP led by fluent native speaker, beginning **first week of October** at the Connor home in **Reading**.

ALLOTMENT DIGGING. Come and help us clear, dig and plant our allotment, from the **first week October onwards**. Lunch/Tea provided afterwards at the Connor home.

THAMES VALLEY FESTIVAL OF SCIENCE, 25th-27th October, 9am-4.30pm at Reading

College of Technology, Kings Road.

Drama with Floating Point Theatre, 'Musical Squares' (Lecture/ Demonstration)

Electronics and Water Projects to make and take home.

'Science of Magic Show', hands on exhibits, 'Starlab'

Entry by pre-booked ticket only £3.50 adult, £2.50 child (min age 4 years).

Group of 4 or more £2 per person.

We are going in a group on **Thursday 27th October**. If you want to join us, send a cheque for £2, payable to Science Development Project, to Pat Connor by Wednesday 12th October.

If you want to go individually send cheque for full amount (£3.50 or £2.50) to:

SciTech Centre, Nightingale Road, Woodley, Reading RG5 3LY.

Further details from Pat Connor, 2 Whitegates Lane, Earley, Reading RG6 1ED

Tel: 0734 662123.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE :

The following events have been arranged in our area. Anyone and everyone is welcome to come, but please phone Joyce Moore on 0908 562451 first as some arrangements may change and other events may be added.

Sat. October 15th - 2pm. Talk with live bats by North Bucks Group at 31 Helpswell, Two Mile Ash, **Milton Keynes**. Free but donations welcomed.

Weds. October 19th - 1pm Ice Skating at **Milton Keynes** Leisure Plaza (near the station). £2.60 (including skate hire if we number more than 15). We will be preceding the skating with a guided tour behind the scenes to see how an ice rink works.

Thurs. November 3rd - 2pm, Activity World (indoor adventure playground) **Denbeigh** Leisure Centre, **Milton Keynes**. £1.50 children, 60p adults.

Weds. November 9th - 11am, Newport Pagnell Police Museum, High St., **Newport Pagnell**. Meet in the front office of the police station. Guided tour of old, modern and overseas police equipment with a serving policeman plus a limited look at the current station.

Fri. November 18th - Roller skating at Rollers, **Denbeigh** Leisure Centre. £2 per head.

Tues. November 29th - 1pm, Swimming at Dolphin Splashdown, Engaine Drive, Shenley Church End, **Milton Keynes**. Meet at reception for possible group discount.

We also have local newsletter with more information for the area available from Caroline Cook on (0296) 720026. It costs 40p with an SAE or 60p otherwise.

CUMBRIA :

We meet in **Kendal** every **Wednesday** from 1 - 4pm in the Youth Centre, Castle Street. In the summer we sometimes go on outings though, so please check that we'll be there. We can also send you our programmes of planned activities for the next few months. Contact Jane Gregory 05395 67344.

DERBYSHIRE :

The **Derbyshire group meets most weeks**. We have an exciting Autumn programme planned including ice-skating, swimming, glass painting, behind the scenes at a cinema, a cave visit and much more.....

Telephone or send an S.A.E. for details to : Kerry Meek, 15 Meadow Close, Sponton, Derbyshire, DE21 7GS. Tel: (0332) 662596

HERTFORDSHIRE :

Herts. EO **thursday Club meets weekly** at St. Ethelreda's Church Hall, **Old Hatfield** (5 minutes walk from the railway station) from 1.30pm. Activities are varied, starting with a group workshop, e.g. this month : Baking, 'junk' modelling, country dance..., followed by play activities. Refreshments available.

We also have another weekly meeting for swimming, walks, Activity World and visits of interest.

Bi- monthly Herts EO newsletter and events list, phone Glyn on 0707 335428 for details.

Herts EO 'Older' group (10 yrs +). We play badminton **once a fortnight** at the Birchwood Leisure Centre, Longmead, **Hatfield**. Cost £1 per person. Spare racquets available or better ones at 60p an hour hire at the centre. No previous experience necessary !

In addition we organise educational/interest visits. If you are interested in any of these activities or simply wish to make contact with other members who have children in the 'older' age range, please telephone Lynne Fox on 0707 271594, or Donna Maskell on 0707 328635. We will be happy to give you what help we can.

KENT :

EO EVENTS

OCTOBER

Thursday 5th - '**Open House**', Cath Coopers, 162 Bush Road, **Cuxton**. Tel : 0634 715389. Noon onwards.

Friday 14th - **Canterbury Cathedral** - Project hut activity booked relating to writing and manuscripts, role of monks in producing books. Meet at 11.15am at main entrance to Cathedral. Cost 50p per child, places are limited so please ring Sue birchett to book in advance. We will have the use of the lunch room from 12.30 pm, cost 30p per person.

Friday 28th - **Rochester Castle**, Cathedral and Museum - meet at 12 noon in the Castle gardens. Free entry to the castle will be arranged. Later in the afternoon we will visit the museum and/or Cathedral.

NOVEMBER

Thursday 3rd - Cath Cooper's - As October.

Monday 7th - **Friend's Meeting House, Union Street, Maidstone**, 12.00 to 4.00 pm. We are re-opening our winter get togethers and hope to plan themes for each meeting. Bring lunch and ideas. Cost approx. £2 per family, everyone welcome.

Tuesday 15th - Swimming - **Larkfield Leisure Centre**, meet 12 noon in the water.

DECEMBER

Thursday 1st - Cath Cooper's - as October

* We have begun **monthly pottery sessions** with the potter at **Aylesford Priory**. Each child is able to take a turn on the wheel and create own designs by hand. Cost £2.50 per child for approx. 1 1/2 hour session. We do not book very far in advance so please ring Sue Burchett for details of next session.

* **Advance notice - Childrens Party - Friday 16th December - Friend's Meeting House, Union Street, Maidstone**. 12.00 to 17.00 Please ring Sue Burchett to confirm numbers if you would like to join in.

Sue Burchett Tel : 0732 870344

Open House Days - Please ring Cath in the morning to check that there are no alterations to arrangements.

LEICESTERSHIRE :

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT TO LEICESTERSHIRE EOers !

As from **September 5th 1994**, there will be regular **weekly meetings**, held **every Monday** from 10 am to 3 pm. These will be at **The Friends Meeting House**, corner of Queens Road & Victoria Park Road in **Leicester**. We are planning to offer the children various activities, games etc. For further information contact Frances Ryan on 0533 - 302504, or just come along and join in !

LONDON :

An all London listing has been produced by the co-ordinators and sent to all members in London. If you would like a copy of this please contact Toni Cusham - address below. The listing will come out quarterly and cost £5.00 per year. The next issue is out at the beginning of December - any contributions (deadline 1st November), and subscriptions should be sent to - Toni Cusham, 17 Crosby Road, Forest Gate, London, E7 9HU.

SCIENCE AT THE OTHERWISE CLUB, LONDON

We are hoping to have a series of science talks aimed at the over 11's on **Thursday afternoons** during the next year:

November 3rd, 2.00pm. 'Microbes and Homo Sapiens', given by Alan Cremer of the Dept. of Microbiology at University College Hospital.

December 8th, 2.30pm. 'Animal Flight', given by Dr. Susan Evans of the Dept. of Anatomy and Developmental Biology at University College, London.

Everyone is welcome to attend, we hope to have a good audience of people who have done a bit of background work and have some questions to ask.

The **Otherwise Club** is at **The Carlton Centre, Kilburn**. There is a small visitors fee of £2.00 per family but do come along and spend the day with us, younger children will find lots of other activities. Ring Sue Petschaft on 0892 661319 for details and directions.

NORTH LONDON :

We meet on **alternate Mondays** during **term-time** for ice-skating at **Alexandra Palace**. 12.30-1.30, £1.50 per child, followed by co-operative games in the grounds if it's fine. If wet we go to a nearby community centre, £1.00 per family. For dates or any other activities that may be arranged please ring Jo Jenkins on 081 883 8052

SOUTH EAST LONDON :

Weekly Large Energetic Social Gathering - Thursday 12 - 4pm. St. Nicholas Church Hall and Gardens, Deptford. Bring lunch. **Term-time only**. Ring Nodge 081 469 0413 for details.

Fortnightly outings Wed/Fri to a city farm, museums, parks. Small groups, exchanges, writing group. Ring Susan 081 858 8714

Monthly swimming - Croydon Water Palace, Fridays. Ring Cathy 081 693 1258
Monthly play up to sevens and mutual encouragement of parents! **Tuesday mornings, Greenwich**. Ring Caterina 081 853 4024

Social contact, general info., EO and other camps ?? Possibility of a group meeting in Bromley ? If interested please ring Chrystia & Keith 081 776 8597

SUFFOLK

EO meetings every three weeks from 9th Sept. Phone : 0379 783678 for details

SUSSEX :

The local monthly newsletter gives details of our varied activities spread all over the county, available for £7 a year (£3.50 for six issues), cheques payable to ESEO. Contact Lyndon Pugh for subscription details. Come to our **monthly 'Open Day'** at **Horsham** for Trampolining, table tennis, new and second hand books and clothes for sale.
Isobel Bogucki.

SUSSEX EAST :

Co-ordinator : Anne Rix, Silver Birch, Cross in Hand, TN21 0LQ. Tel. 0435 862794
Newsletter Editor : Lyndon Pugh, The Barn, Mongers Farm, Barcome, Lewes, BN8 5BQ.
Tel/Fax 0273 400769. Compuserve ID 100016,3150.
Events/ Projects co-ordinators : Ian & Jenny Lawes, Tel. 0273 883977

SUSSEX WEST :

Co-ordinator: Isobel Bogucki, 20 Rusper Road, Horsham. Tel: 0403 261178.
Newsletter/Events : See Sussex East.

WARWICKSHIRE:

Everyone is welcome to attend the following meetings for Warwickshire EO.

Weds. Oct. 12th - 10.30am onwards. Planning meeting and construction activities. Contact Alison Cox : 0926 613619.

Weds. Nov. 16th. Co-operative games in **Banbury**. Contact Margret Harper : 0295 711991.

Weds. Dec. 7th - 10.30am onwards. Stories and poems to share. Contact Vivienne Bennett : 0608 641354, or Alison Cox : 0926 613619.

WEST YORKSHIRE REGION:

Monthly meetings continue on the **last Thursday of every month (excluding December)**

Next one's 27th October, 24th November, 26th January and 23rd of February. Time has changed to **10.30am - 1pm.** Still at the **Child Guidance Centre**, next to the community charge + rates paying office, at **Huddersfield Civic Centre**, 2 minutes walk from bus station. The meetings have been enjoyable - please come along.

At time of writing this, we are booked for a group of 20 to visit the Imax cinema to see Africa the Serengeti at group rates in September.

October 12th: Meet at **Cliffe Castle, Keighley** 11.30am for museum visit (free), followed by swimming at Keighley Leisure Centre from 2-4pm - unless above 40 of us were going, with prior arrangement made with centre by 4th Oct. Please ring 0484 846946 or just turn up.

November 9th: Meet 11am onwards at Diane + Martyn's house, 36 Dirker Drive, **Marsden, Hudds.** Bring lunch to share - I'll make baked potatoes - followed by canalside walk to Tunnel End Centre where I have provisionally booked an education room for activities. Please ring 0484 846946 - possibly boat ride if enough come along.

Kim Wark (Rod, Samuel, Matthew and Miriam too.) We have now moved house and are now at: 48, Langford Lane, Burley in Wharfedale, LS29 7EJ. Tel: (0943) 862453.

I would like to have a 'house warming' on **Tuesday 18th October** 10.30am - whenever. Bring your own lunch, drinks provided, take home a strawberry plant (garden overrun with them!) Our house is 10-15 mins walk from the Metro train station (trains from Bradford or Leeds) and near bus stops (buses from Leeds, Bradford + Skipton.) Please phone for details and to let me know you're coming. I would like to see old friends and meet new ones.

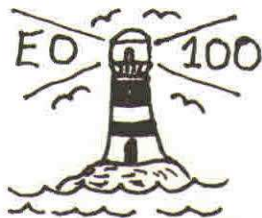
May I also apologise to people who have phoned me and not heard back - our house sale and purchase was a bit fraught and involved a lot of tidying up (and lost papers.) Please contact me again, and I will be a bit more organised! Friends from North Yorkshire also welcome - Burley is almost in your county!

NORTH YORKSHIRE :

October 19th (Wednesday) Barbican, York - we have booked the sports hall from 2-4pm.

November 14th Meet at Marit and Johnson's house 11am onwards at **Leaving, Nr Malton.** For more information contact Marit on 0653 - 658346.

Language Books: Diane Shuker, who runs Worldwise Books and Toys from her home in York, has asked me to let EOers know that as well as multicultural resources she also has in stock a range of Children's Books in **FRENCH** (from 'Spot' through to Ladybird books to Teenage Fiction) and can obtain similar books in German, Spanish etc. Tel: 0904 647340.



EDUCATING ARCHIE

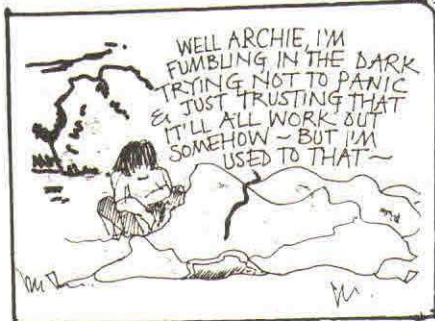
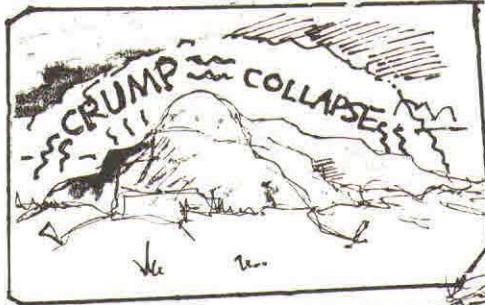
In this, the 100th issue of the newsletter, we pay tribute to the role of the TENT in home education, & to the STIRLING efforts of our own MRS G.



SO MUCH NICER CAMPING AFTER ALL THE CROWDS HAVE GONE - THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF ED -

OK, IT'S A BIT COLD AND WINDY, BUT

YOU ALL RIGHT IN THERE, MUM?



BY SEP 2004

for the family

~ LETTERS ~

Too early in the morning, 18th June
Barracks Farm, E O Peak Camp

Dear EO,

A search for people making the continuum concept part of their lives has brought us from the continuum network to the natural nurturing network, then to E.O. And so to this picturesque spot outside Hartington, where we are now uncomfortably squashed in a tent; which is a small price to pay for being here. This camp has been a landmark for us. As parents of a 22 month old daughter we have often felt isolated with our weird and wonderful views. To find we are not alone is reassuring and inspiring. Thank you to everyone out there for making this mean what it does to us. It is exciting to be with and talk to parents home educating. It is refreshing to see independent and lively children doing their own thing. We'll see you at next years camp, if not before.

Later on, at home.

We're unpacking, discussing the camp and feeling on a high. Megan doesn't stop concentrating on crayoning in her belly button. "No go to school," she says, "Just go to E. O." We didn't teach her over the weekend, but evidently she learned. And so did we. But of course, this is what this is all about. And on that note I'll get my cheque book out and join E. O.

Diane Haslam

Dear EO,

Bouquet to the borough

I would like to sing the praises of my local borough and its Education Department.

It is a pleasure to compliment them on their attitude towards potential EO parents and children.

On requesting the deregistration of our own child, it was a real surprise to get a letter kindly advising us to join EO. Not only that, but the person's address, should we care to write.

What a sensible way of dealing with what, at the time, can be, a very trying experience for parents and child.

Well done Barking and Dagenham Authority, please continue to give the same degree of assistance to all others, as you did for us.

Thank you very much
Pat and Jeff Chesney, West Essex Tel:081-9847483

Dear EO,

Further to Isobel Bogucki's request for suggestions i.e. new co-ordinators information: please can anyone who has ideas for 'assessing' autonomous education, let me know what (if any) methods, have proved acceptable, both to you, the home educating family, and your local LEA.

With many thanks,

Poppy Green, 15, Bellevue, Bristol BS8 1DB, 0272-735091.

Dear EO,

I have been home-schooling my son, Dan, since January, he is 9 in August. We are both very happy with the turn out our lives have taken. We would like to make contact with other people in our area, the Solway Firth corner of Cumbria, and maybe have regular meetings/outings together. I would be happy to use my house as a base initially.

We shall be away until August 19th but after that please call us on: 06973-22102.

Penny Cox, Sycamore House, Overby, Silloth, Carlisle CA5 4NG

Dear EO,

I am 28, married and I am thinking of home-educating my two children. Tom is nearly four and Sophie is just 8 weeks. I would like to make friends with people in my area who are already home-educating or thinking seriously about it. I am new in the area and would like friends within visiting distance, and with children, if possible, who are similar in age so we can all socialize and discuss views. Please write to: Marcella Rose, 5 Hill Top Way, Stanton, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 2EB.

Dear EO,

Is there anyone educating at home in the North Hampshire area? We have recently moved near to Basingstoke. We are Chris, Corinne, Joshua (4 1/2) and Thomas (22 months). We would especially like to hear from folk interested in meeting regularly for friendships and activities.

If you're out there we would love to hear from you.

Corinne Lindsey, 1 Northington Farm cottages, Overton, Basingstoke, Herts, RG25 3DJ.

Dear EO,

Recently, while thumbing through a back issue of the newsletter (issue No 74, June 1990) we came across a letter ('North of England, Rural Project') from "Caryn and Pete, c/o 90 Gunnergate Lane, Marton Middlesborough," who sought to contact other people who wished to live co-operatively in a rural project and "share children's activities, work schemes, land and tools." We are interested to know how they got on and to learn about their experiences. Caryn and Pete, if you are reading this please get in contact.

If you know how Caryn and Pete got on, or are in contact with them we would also value hearing from you. Rob Warren and Frances Orde, 26, Palace Street, Berwick Upon Tweed, Northumberland, TD15 1HN. Tel:-(0289) 330131

Dear EO,

I recently wrote to the RSPB telling them I was teaching my child at home and asking them for details of their education services.

I received back: a membership application form for RSPB, one for the young ornithologist's club and one for group membership of the YOC; a list of their nature reserves throughout Britain; a leaflet about a programme of environmental education for 5-8 year olds called First Nature which is on offer at a number of their reserves; their Education Catalogue which includes lists of their educational books, posters, games and videos and also addresses of regional advisors and the names and addresses of reserves which provide teaching schemes.

I assume they would be quite happy to supply the same to anyone else who was to write in.

Jane Arnold.

Dear EO,

Although I will shortly be attending Worcester sixth Form College, I would like to add something to the discussion on structured or non-structured education.

I was home-educated from the age of seven. From seven to eleven I had structured education. During these years I covered a wide range of subjects and learned a great deal. When I hit teenage years I became very creative, I think all girls of that age do. Academic subjects did not interest me, so we decided to try without. I drew, painted, sang, played my recorder to its limits, composed folk tunes, and enlarged my knowledge of my favourite authors and playwrights. I read Chekhov. I also started learning some of Shakespeare's plays and found my love of acting and the theatre. I wrote poetry, some of which was published

and made and sold my own jewellery. But the most important thing I learned, and the hardest to put into practice, was to take life as it comes, make the best of what you have and not to waste time thinking of things past and gone.

Now I am 15 and I am back to academic study once more. I am still creative, I still write poetry, but now I also write plays and stories. I am hopefully aiming for University and training as an actor.

Without my creative, non-structured years I would not have my acting ambition or half my ideas, knowledge of theatre, or inspiration. Without my years of structured education I would not have the means to be able to obtain my career in the theatre, for which you need qualifications.

So I am not completely for structured education, neither am I completely for non-structured education. But I do think, that a mixture of both, at the right times, can help a great deal.

Jennifer Smith, 22 Quest Hills Rd, Malvern, Worcs, WR14-1RW.

Dear EO,

I live with my 5 year old daughter, Belinda, in a village about 10 miles from Norwich.

I've been a member of EO for a year now, but have not, so far, felt the need for contact with others in the same situation.

However, if there is anyone out there who is not into large groups but prefers chats over coffee (or whatever) I would love to hear from you.

In fact, even if you are into large groups - actually, whatever you're into, get in touch: write, phone, send a puppy with a message in its collar, anything!

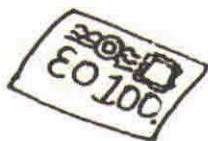
Sue Mchon, 'Ivanhoe', The Street, Hockering, Norfolk, NR20 3HL.

Dear EO,

We are new members of EO, and would like to get in touch with other parents with similar views. Although our oldest child is only three, we have been considering home education for some time, not least because it is common in this area to be in full-time nursery at 2 1/2, and full-time school at four. As committed Christians (Free Presbyterian) we feel it would be wrong to hand over the upbringing of our children to those with quite different philosophies and beliefs, at such an early age. We have no objection to the idea of school *per se*, but only to the religious and 'moral' theories and ideals on which it is presently based in our area.

If there are any parents who feel the same we would like to hear from them, particularly any living in the London area. Would anyone be interested in forming a group of Christian Home-Educating parents?

Henrietta and Julian Turnbull 161 Falloden Way, London NW11 6LG.



letter written 19.10.94

Dear EO,

I would like to volunteer to be the contact for parents with over 11's, as I am interested in developing more support and opportunities for this age group in staying out of school.

I am keen to hear from anyone with ideas for providing for the needs of this age group within EO. My mind runs along the lines of special interest camps e. g. computers, role playing games, survival, life skills etc. I only had 2 replies from my last letter about educating over 11's out of school. What does this mean?

Sue Petsaft. (0892) 661 319

2 Leylands Manor
Tubwell Lane
Crowborough E. Sussex
TN6 3RH

Dear EO,

Since taking my child out of school last year (a shy child, who was bullied) I have been an avid reader of anything to do with home education and have tried to become as involved as possible, especially in my area.

Like many other families, it is not the teaching that un-nerves me, it is other peoples' attitudes. I have several friends who are teachers (I have yet to decide whether this is a blessing or a curse!) and whilst most are supportive a few are dubious, so I try to bear in mind that as they spend most of their lives in the system, they will obviously believe in it. However, I have one good friend whose comments prompted me to write this letter. She states that, whilst she fully supports people like myself whose child has problems withing school, she feels strongly that parents should not have the right to decide that their children will never attend school. As school is 'the norm,' the child should at least have the chance to try it. Even more disturbing, she feels that children who have never attended school will have problems in later life.

This I cannot believe. Perhaps it is time someone did some research, as I am convinced that there are many adults out there who were home-educated and who are quietly making a success of their lives. If they have problems, and don't we all, who is to say that they relate to the fact that they were home-educated? Incidentally, we're still friends!

Finally, my family would love to attend a National Gathering but at present finances don't permit, but in the meantime can we please thank all those people who were at the end of the phone when we really needed them.

Taking a child out of school is a traumatic experience and I feel this is where EO comes into its own. I try to give something back by being here if anyone needs my support.

Elaine Slade, 34, Parklands Rise, Minehead, West Somerset, TA24 8UD.

Dear EO,

Finally after a year of membership of EO, I am inspired by Alix Duce and Jim Maynards' letter to write the letter I have long had in mind but not got round to writing.

19.

I agree wholeheartedly with all they say, and wish we lived close enough to respond in person, however.....

We are Tim, Monika, and Holly (2 1/2). at the moment we live in East Sussex, but we hope, in the not- to- distant future to return to East Devon/ West Dorset (or may be somewhere totally different !) where we can have a home and some land.

I (Monika) have for many years felt unhappy with the school system, having as a private music/piano teacher, had experience of the difficulties of teaching pupils in the 'system'. I also teach Alexander Technique, which has added even more to my thoughts on 'education'. It was therefore a natural progression for me to want to investigate the idea of learning at home for our daughter; and the more I read and discover, the more I feel it is 'right'. Tim, however remains to be convinced, and, as with all families I know there will be pressure on us to send Holly to school. I also, of course, have my concerns over certain aspects.

We too would like to shout 'HELP !' to anyone willing to respond - either in person; or in writing. Are you, like us, considering the pros and cons before the age of 'compulsory' schooling? Have you been through this and can share your thoughts and decisions? How do you, or did you, resolve conflicting ideas between parents?

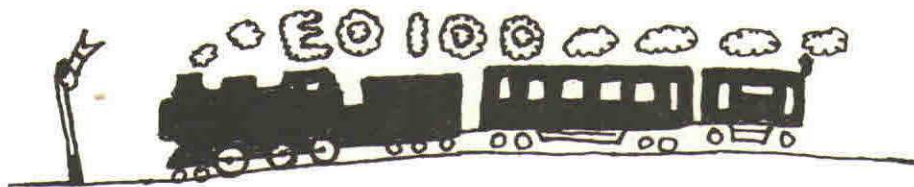
I am also willing to share music and/or Alexander Technique with children out of school, in exchange for anything which will benefit Holly.

Do get in touch if you are interested.

Monika, Tim, and Holly Henshaw.

1 Sharp's Corner Cottages, Little London Road, Horam, Heathfield, East Sussex, TN21 0BJ

Tel: 0435 812839



1993 EDUCATION ACT Part 3 (Special Needs section)

This has superseded the 1981 Act - but there has been no alteration to the right to home educate - whether or not the child has 'special needs'. Section 36 of the 1944 Act (as amended by the 1981 Act) still applies.

People who should know better frequently tell parents that home education is not allowed or that they cannot take a child out of school, if s/he has a 'Statement'. This is still not true! 'Statements' are not intended to confer extra rights and powers on an LEA but are supposed to determine a child's needs and specify how those needs should be met. I believe we should regard them, not as threats, but as 'offers of help' (I can almost hear the hollow laughter ringing from all parts of the country!)

The relevant section of the 1993 Act is S168(5)(a):

- "Unless the parents have made suitable arrangements, the authority -
- (i) shall arrange that the special educational provision specified in the statement is made for the child, and
 - (ii) may arrange that any non-educational provision specified in the statement is made.,
-(etc. etc.)"

However, it appears that the 1993 Act has made one discriminatory change: a parent of a child with a statement which names a school can no longer ask the LEA to revoke a School Attendance Order on the grounds that the child is receiving a suitable education 'otherwise than at school'. Anyone who is threatened with an SAO should not panic! Seek advice immediately and remember that genuine threats are rare, and that even they can be averted.

=====
=====
Colin Blain and Alison Peries have two children: John (4 1/2) and Elizabeth (2).
John has Down's Syndrome and acute lymphoblastic leukaemia. Alison writes:

When John was about 18 months old, I read an article in 'Good Housekeeping' magazine about Home Education and in the past three years we have moved from a position of "that sounds good but we couldn't do it!" to a position of "we are going to do it!". It has taken that long to re-adjust our notions of education, learning, child psychology, sociology, and not least, self-confidence. Though I will admit to having a crisis of confidence now I have refused to have John 'statemented' by the L.E.A. and so have "burnt my bridges" with regard to getting him special educational provision in a school setting at 5. However, our options are never completely closed - he could be statemented later if he chose to go to school.

John doesn't talk yet, except in single words, but uses sign language. Most of the time we have no trouble in understanding him - but that has come about by being around him constantly - how could a classroom assistant who is with him only six hours a week (the most usual support offered in mainstream schools in Sheffield) communicate as effectively? And the rest of the time he would be on his own amongst 35 other children! Special school would never be an option for us - we want him to socialise with society at large, not segregate him from the word go!

He seems likely to continue to be in nappies for some time, due to his hypotonic muscle tone, delayed development and the effects of his continuing chemotherapy treatment. This doesn't present us with any great problem - he will become dry one day - but what a stigma to start school with !

In common with all toddlers John learns best by playing on his own - if you try too hard to direct his play, or make him work too hard he (like most children) will simply 'shut down' - and will do it so single-mindedly and effectively that there is no way of getting through to him until he decides to come out of it ! I can't imagine how his learning capacity could be increased by sitting in a classroom.

At times, John's chemotherapy treatment leaves him with very little resistance to infection - if he were in school we would have no way of knowing what illnesses he was coming into contact with. From a purely selfish motive too, if he doesn't survive the disease I don't want someone else to have had the pleasure of his company for eight hours a day while I sat at home waiting for his return.

All these reasons are on top of the usual ones for keeping a child out of school - the peer group pressure, the labelling, the unfairness of the testing, etc... (the reasons why we shall be keeping Elizabeth at home as well), and I've written them down because:

- 1) It has helped me clarify in my own mind just why we're swimming against the tide.
- 2) it might help anyone else who has a special needs and/or a sick child to consider their options in education.

I would like to correspond with other people who have non-verbally communicating children who are home-educated. I promise to try to answer all letters.

69 Lundwood Grove, Owthorpe, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S19 6SR

'Language ... on the line'

By Kim Wark

We have had a much happier experience with a speech therapist in the last couple of years, than the one mentioned in a previous newsletter. We took Matthew about once a month, at a time when one of us could take just Matthew for a morning appointment. Helen, the speech therapist, related very well to him, and was a pleasant, helpful person, looking for feedback, suggesting ideas and loaning out equipment. As he got to know her, Matthew spoke more clearly about a wider range of topics. We could see he had made progress during the last couple of years and friends have also remarked on this.

One specific language skill has developed AT HOME using unexpected 'equipment'. Matthew has cracked the possessive thanks to helping me hang the washing on the line and commenting whose clothes they are - 'Matthew's socks, Mummy's dress, Daddy's T-shirt, etc. ('Mummy's nitters' has now clarified to 'Mummy's nickers'!) Try it !

He has also mastered using spring pegs and can peg washing out by himself, which is also a useful skill !

48, Langford Lane, Burley in Wharfedale, Ilkley, LS 29 7EJ
(0943) 862453 Visitors welcome (phone or write first!!)

MORE ABOUT DYSLEXIA.

Way back in June 1986 I produced my first 'special needs' supplement. Almost half of it was devoted to an article by Keith Miller of Wiltshire, entitled: DYSLEXIA.....MYTH.....MAGIC.....OR REALITY?

Over the years I have received hundreds of enquiries and requests for advice about dyslexia, and the subject has featured in many SEN supplements and in the main newsletters too. A quick skim through that first article shows that the themes haven't changed: people have consistently told stories of frustration and low self-esteem, lack of understanding and/or desire to help in the 'system', the uselessness of ordinary remedial teaching and the woeful lack of knowledge about suitable teaching methods and resources.

But there are happier notes: people tell how home education helps. Children can become happy and confident again, and be helped to overcome their problems and to achieve success. Donald Payne (Northampton) wrote about this in the last newsletter (August 1994) and the response he received prompted him to write the letter on page 7.

Many of the books and resources mentioned or listed by the authors of the articles and letters below are on the 'dyslexia list' I have been sending out in response to enquiries over the last few years. I have tidied up that list, added more detail and more items, but unfortunately there is only space in this supplement to include a shortened version (see Page 8). I'll send the full list to anyone who sends an SAE and an extra stamp.

Susan Godsland (Devon) removed her dyslexic son Nicholas (now aged 8) from school over a year ago. She writes:

Soon after my son Nicholas started school I obtained a job as a special needs classroom assistant in a local middle school. I had no (formal) qualifications for the job. I only spent a few minutes a day with 'my' child as I needed to help with several of the other children in the class, because the school had plenty of children with serious emotional and other learning problems - most had failed to obtain a Statement.

Meanwhile Nick was having a hard time at school. He was constantly ill with stomach-ache and ear infections, was bullied and seemed to be making no progress in reading and writing. He was very unhappy. I made frequent visits to voice my concerns ... I was met with bland reassurances but started to notice that that the errors my son made in his writing were similar to those of the dyslexic child in my care. I suggested that this might be Nick's problem to his teacher but she was clueless on the subject. It was agreed that he should see the educational psychologist but we were warned that: a) he would be at the bottom of a very long list and b) the psychologist was not due in the foreseeable future. We took him to a private psychologist recommended by the local dyslexia association. She confirmed our suspicions and said he would not be able to cope in a noisy, crowded classroom.

Really, I had no option but to leave my recent hard-gained job and teach Nick at home. Luckily, I knew this was an option having researched home-ed about five years earlier when my older children were going through an unhappy phase at school. I knew that the ultimate offering of our LEA if Nick could get a Statement, was an untrained classroom assistant who would spend scant time with him.

I find that working with a dyslexic child is very different from working with 'normal' children (after my experiences in school and with my two older, very academic

children). Because Nick finds reading difficult he does not have any inclination to go off and find things out for himself from our vast home library - however interesting he finds the subject. As he cannot write easily (his hand-writing is good - he just can't spell or construct sentences) he avoids any situation where this might be needed. Luckily, Nick has a good mathematical brain, loves technology and is a whiz on the computer.

Nick has poor concentration and memory and I need to sit with him most of the time we are working in order to keep him 'on the job' and to remind him where we're at! I feel that routine and repetition are important to our 'school day' because of his problem, but apart from concentrating on the 3 R's I do not try and reproduce the National Curriculum.

Once a week, for an hour, he visits a trained dyslexia teacher and last term we started fax-tutoring with the Open School at Dartington - also for an hour a week, and his tutor is, yet again, dyslexia trained. She is coaxing some writing out of him and a more school-like approach to a subject. Unfortunately, because of the cost, I doubt we shall be able to continue it for more than a couple of terms.

I use the 'Alpha to Omega' book on a regular basis - this has spelling and dictation exercises designed for dyslexics and is easy to follow.

Looking at Nick now we are sure it was the right decision. He no longer suffers from constant ill-health, has many more friends, has proved to have an excellent mathematical mind and is fast improving his reading and writing skills. I don't know what the future holds. Ideally, I'd like Nick to go to a 'small school', Hartland style when he reaches secondary age but there is nothing like that near here.

I'd welcome any friendly comments, ideas or contact with other families especially those home-educating a dyslexic child (which I often find a lonely and frustrating task).

3, Chester Close, Exeter, Devon EX4 2EJ (Tel: 0392 438844)

Sue Burchett (Kent) is an EOer and a teacher working with dyslexic children. She hopes some of her experience may be useful to others:

I am writing here about early signs of literacy problems and how best to help them. It may be useful to parents of young children who suspect that their children have a problem. Some of the ideas will be helpful to any parent setting out on the road to literacy.

The word 'Dyslexia' originates from Greek and means "difficulty with words or language". It is a syndrome - which means it is a collection of similar features but that it may vary in each individual. It is also developmental and therefore changes over time - dyslexics suffer from a delay in written language acquisition.

Some of the possible signs of dyslexia are :

- often problems during pregnancy and childbirth
- child may miss out the crawling stage
- child may be late in learning to talk
- clumsiness
- poor sense of direction
- lack of organisation
- difficulty in recognising or understanding what a rhyme is
- confusion between similar letters - d/b, p/q, m/w, n/u

- poor vowel discrimination
- reversals of syllables or words
- bizarre spelling
- difficulty in remembering more than one thing at a time
- difficulty in learning anything in sequence eg: days of the week
- difficulty in learning to use a clock or watch

There are many many more indicators. It is worth noting that it is more common in males (approx. three out of four dyslexics are male) and that it runs in families. No dyslexics will have difficulty in every area - some will have great strengths in other areas and maths ability may or may not be affected

What can I do to help my child in the early stages ?

If there is a literacy problem a multi-sensory approach is essential. Thus if one sense channel is weak, teaching methods which use many sense channels increase the opportunity of learning through the stronger channels. These methods should include the use of eyes, ears, mouth, touch and writing. The main aim is to use several senses simultaneously.

For example, the following combinations could be used :

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|---|---|
| 1. -looking at a letter | -eyes | } | |
| -tracing its shape with a finger | -touch | } | * |
| -saying the letter sound | -mouth and ear | } | |
| 2. -saying the letter sound | -mouth and ears | } | |
| -feeling a wooden or plastic letter | -touch | } | * |
| -looking at the letter | -eyes | } | |
| 3. -saying the letter sound | -mouth and ears | } | |
| -writing the letter | -hand | } | * |
| -looking at it being written | -eyes | } | |

* ALL AT THE SAME TIME

Remember - the ears are as important as the eyes when learning to spell.

A simple game is to trace a letter on the child's back with a finger. The child has to recognise and tell you the letter. A more active game is to write large letters on sheets of paper and spread them out on the floor. The child jumps on the appropriate letter when it is called out.

I would recommend the Letterland ABC (approx. £8) for a visual image of letters and their sounds (each letter becomes a character who lives in Letterland). Children seem able to learn the letters very quickly this way as they find it easy to relate to the characters rather than to shapes written on paper. There is more to the characters than may at first meet the eye - they mainly face in the direction of writing. Hairy Hat Man (letter H) wears no shoes because he is always quiet and helps to make the sound 'sh', etc. (The teacher's manuals which go with the programme introduce spelling patterns and rules using stories to illustrate them.)

Other things which will help are: focusing on one thing at a time rather than trying to encourage lots of learning at once, give instructions singly (don't ask a child to go upstairs, fetch a jumper, clean their teeth, and put a toy away all at once) and encourage an atmosphere where the child can achieve small steps rather than accept failure as normal.

Charts are useful – for ticking off things the child can be responsible for daily or for showing (in pictures) what regular events happen on each day of the week, (eg. Monday - swimming, Tuesday - EO meeting.) These will help with organisational difficulties and self-confidence as well as helping with sequencing. Make sure that the child knows that days of the week / months of the year are cyclic.

Find ways of practising left and right. It is very important that letters are written in the correct direction (any hand-writing text book or workbook will show you this) and that the pencil is held properly. If the child finds this difficult use a pencil grip. If the hand grips too tight, causing the hand to ache quickly, try some hand relaxation exercises or fast scribbling before beginning to write.

Lower case letters should be used at first as the letters/words will have more shape which will be a memory aid. eg: HAPPY vs. happy. Joined writing should be attempted fairly early with EVERY LETTER BEING JOINED. This will lead to quite a few loops but it is a good way to keep the mind flowing and the hand will almost 'memorise' common words, whereas the pencil being repeatedly taken off the paper causes mental stops and starts. You should be aiming for a flow between the brain and hand.

Once individual letter sounds have been mastered thoroughly work on consonant - vowel-consonant words, blending the sounds. Work on words with the same pattern. eg. c-a-t cat, f-a-t fat, h-a-t hat, etc. Avoid words which use sounds other than pure letter sounds, eg. c-a-r when blended does not say 'car' (which is made up from c-ar), w-a-s does not say 'was'. These patterns and rules should be tackled at a later date.

Follow on by working on consonant blends, eg: fl, gl, cl, pr, gr, st, sl, tw, using words such as fl-a-t, fr-o-g, cl-a-p, st-o-p, which can be made up from the blends and letter sounds. Avoid words such as st-a-r (this needs to be learned as st-ar). Again, tackle at a later date.

Some common words will need to be learned separately (eg: and, the, said, they), but soon simple / silly sentences can be made up :

The dog ran to the big log

The fox had a red bag and a flat cap

The frog sat at the bus stop and had a rest

Reading books which follow this type of spelling scheme are difficult to obtain. It is best to limit reading to what has been written or to write your own simple stories and books for your child using words already learned.

Due to memory problems in the dyslexic child or child with learning difficulties it is necessary that practice be carried out on a regular basis - at least one hour per week and preferably twenty to thirty minutes each day (this would be much better than one or two longer sessions). At the very least read through the current spelling list each day. A good time to do this is before going to sleep at night.

Above all try to make learning fun - it is not easy to enjoy something that you find very difficult to master, but with the use of games and funny stories your child can learn in an active and entertaining way.

2, Easterfield Cottages, East Malling, Kent ME19 6BE Tel: 0732 870344

Mrs G. Youd (Cheshire) has allowed her letter to Donald Payne to be included:

Dear Mr Payne,

I found your article in the newsletter of great encouragement.

James, nearly 13, has been at home for the last year. His reading has come on wonderfully, his writing, spelling etc. are progressing at a steady although slow pace. For his maths work - we decided to go right back to basics and start again to build on what he can do. (He had a habit of just making wild guesses!)

He has gained in confidence in the last year (others have commented on this) and is reasonably happy.

His special teacher from primary school (he had one afternoon a week shared with 3 others) was very helpful and gave me advice on the multi-sensory spelling scheme she had been using - Violet Brand's 'Spelling Made Easy'.

On the whole we're all happy we made the decision we did, and your article helped reinforce our determination to carry on - thank you very much.

Head Gardeners Cottage, Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire WA 16 6QL

Finally, Donald Payne writes:

Thank you to all the members who wrote to me in response to my article "Dyslexia: the best option" in the last issue of EO.

It is encouraging to know that so many parents have withdrawn their dyslexic child from school, and have found that they can meet the child's needs within the family much better than the school seems able to do. All report a happier child; behaviour problems and upset tummies disappear and they see the child gradually gaining self confidence. Nobody pretends that they found it easy but all seem to be agreed that they made the right decision.

Those parents who have written to me, almost without exception, feel that they would like to know more about how to go about teaching a dyslexic child. This is something I feel we ought to be able to do something about. I hope it may be possible in the very near future to arrange some sort of one-day workshop where parents and children can meet each other and have hands-on experience of handling the wide range of teaching materials and reading schemes and get experience of learning together. We might even consider a residential weekend, say at a Youth Hostel. The trouble is you all live at such far away places - like Exeter and Gwynedd - miles and miles away from anybody else. But surely there must be half a dozen families who live near enough to each other to make such a get together possible. If you are likely to be interested send me a stamped addressed envelope (or two if possible) and I will keep you informed of what the possibilities are when I see what the response is.

'Sunnyside', Main Street, East Haddon, Northampton NN6 8BU
Tel: 0604 770059

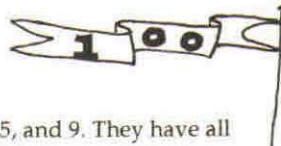
I'm sorry there isn't room for Donald's article about a boy who returned to school after a very short but successful period of home education, or to write more about the news cutting he sent. I just have space to tell you the title:

"Alexander the great conquers dyslexia to get A-level at 11" !

BOOKS AND RESOURCES FOR TEACHING DYSLEXICS

- Dyslexia - What Parents Ought to Know. By Vera Quinn and Alan Macauslan
Published by Penguin
- Teaching Language Disordered Children. By Ella Hutt
(Useful even if they're not!) Published by Edward Arnold.
- Alpha to Omega (Indispensible complete course for teaching dyslexics. Contains lesson plan/suggestions for games etc.) By Beve Hornsby and Frula Shear
ISBN 0 435 10382 2 Published by Heinemann Educational Books Ltd
- Letterland ABC Published by Nelson ISBN 0-17-410166-X
- The Bangor Dyslexia Teaching system By Elaine Miles Published by Thurr
- FUZZ BUZZ (Reading Scheme based on phonics) By Colin Harris et al.
Published by Oxford University Press
- The Kingston Programme: Teaching Reading Through Spelling. (phonics programme)
By L Cowdrey et al.
Published by Frondeg Hall Technical Publishing.
- Beat Dyslexia (Workbooks/tapes: system based on the Hickey scheme used by the Dyslexia Institute)
Details from: The Distributors, Beat Dyslexia,
Toft Trees, Apperley Lane, Bradford BD10 0NS
- Hear It, See it, Say it, Do it.(Series of workbooks) By Mary Atkinson
Details from: Cheerful Publications,
7, Oxley Close, Gidea Park, Romford RM2 6NX
- Teach Your Child to Read. (Reading primer based entirely on phonics)
By Annie Garfield Published by Vermillion (£9.99)
- The Word Bank Project.(Spelling scheme) By Margaret Peters and Charles Cripps
Published by Macmillan Education Ltd.
- Spelling Help (The 500 most frequently used words in children's writing, and their derivatives, for poor spellers - but with the words placed where poor spellers might expect to find them as well as in alpha order!) By B E E Johnson and H Johnson
ISBN 0 631 901078 Published by Basil Blackwell
- Signposts to Spelling By Joy Pollock
Published by Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre, 14, Crondace Rd, London SW6
- Spelling Made Easy.(Series of teacher's books and worksheets) By Violet Brand
Details from EGON Publishers Ltd. Royston Rd. Baldock, Herts. SG7 6NW
- Ant to Zip (Structured/Multi-sensory/Phonic approach. workbooks etc.)
Details from Gifted Children's Information Centre,
Hampton Grange, 21, Hampton Lane, Solihull, B91 2QJ
- Send for catalogues from: Remedial Supply Co, Dixon St. Wolverhampton.
and L D A Ltd. Duke St. Wisbech, Cambs. PE13 2AE
-
- Sylvia Jeffs, 16, St Bernards Rd, Solihull, West Midlands B92 7BB Tel: 021 706 6460

~NOTICES~

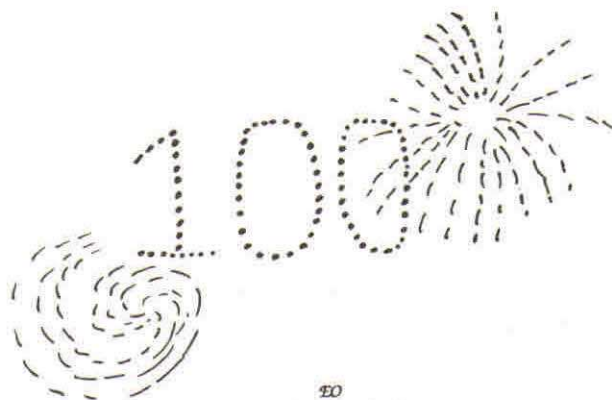


Penfriend Wanted - I am 48 years old and have 3 girls aged 16, 15, and 9. They have all been home-educated until age 9 or 10. The youngest is part-time a Steiner school. We have been members of EO for almost 14 years. I have also taught anti-natal classes at home for ten years. I now have a little time and will write regularly. Yvonne Muckie, 10 Warner Rd. Hornsey, London, N8.

Wanted - Secondhand A BEKA Educational Books. (Primary age) must be cheap, or would be willing to Borrow/Share locally. Contact Paula Turner: 021 770 4967(Birmingham)

Educational Resources We have had a grand sort out of the educational resources and books, mainly for ages 5 to 8, that our sons have outgrown. We would like to offer them cheaply to other members. For a full list please send an S.A.E. to: Laura J. Flawn, Skylarks, 43 Summerfield Rd, Cliftonville, Margate, Kent, CT9 3JJ

Are there any EO families out there willing to temporarily accomodate a young mother and her two well behaved daughters (ages 10 and 8) ? We would be willing to help with teaching and any odd jobs and/or donate a small weekly payment towards our keep. We are a quiet little family and will not cause you any trouble or worry. We are looking for a place to stay in Devon/Cornwall, Isle of Wight, Scotland, France, Italy, America or Australia but would consider other areas in England or abroad. Please reply to Donna, c/o Poppy Green, 15 Bellevue, Clifton, Bristol BS8 1DB. I look forward to hearing from you and hope we can become good friends!



A LETTER FROM DEVON

WE ARE

Belinda, 30 years old. Has a BA Hons in the History of Jazz Voice. She wears green Doc Martins with a fruit design printed on them. Sings with an improvisational 5-piece female jazz ensemble. Makes ceramic pots. Tries to be lovely to her kids. She's round and loud and smiles alot.

Alan, 33 years old. Has a BSc Hons in Maths and Electronics. Wears black trainers. Is a Computer analyst/programmer. Works from home. Loves Reggae music. Plays rough games with Gus and Barnaby when they want, mostly. He's slim and fit and runs alot.

Gus, 7 3/4 years old. He wears hand-made, multi coloured boots from 'Green Shoes', or his wellies. He's just himself alot.

Barnaby, 3 years old. He wears red Converse All Stars bumper boots with flourescent orange laces or bare feet. He's bouncy.

Hello, from glorious Devon. Giant patchwork quilt fields. Foxes, badgers, owls in hedgerows at night. The sea 10 miles away, rolling waves and golden sands and lots of driftwood for night-time bonfires. The moors are 2 miles away from us with wild ponies, cattle and sheep. Tors to climb. Our house is actually on the edge of Dartmoor. No tents up for more than 28 days, if your garden is in view of Dartmoor.

And so to E.O. and The South Devon Education Group. Lots of lovely families down here, quite a few teenagers who have never been to school (hip and groovy). Because of them, this group has a very different feeling from the London group. (Where we have just moved from.) Their parents set up a support group for libertarian based unstructured learning, and the ethos of that still hangs over the group. A very forward thinking lot. There are bi-monthly meetings to discuss forth coming events, problems, thoughts, ideas, with an emphasis on supporting the young people in the meeting and trying to arrange what they want, as opposed to what the adults think they should have/want. Lots going on down here, too much to list. Probably about four events going on a week.

Gus and Barnaby have really taken to country life. Gus is fascinated by birds. Reads, writes about, and draws pictures of birds endlessly (in breeding plummage and without!!) Sits in the garden, binoculars at the ready, to spot kestrels and buzzards that fly over from the moors.

Gus makes up codes. Circles catalogues. Draws dinosaurs and fantasy machines. Makes up stories. Reads comics and Beano Annuals. Plays Monopoly. Makes magic potions with all the food ingredients (bloody hell!!) Cooks it. Smells the house out. Saws wood into little pieces. Makes bombs out of wood and paper and string and Gaffa tape and gun caps. (We're a peace loving family, honest we are!) Finds it stressful putting on his shoes. Makes dens with bedsheets and tables and chairs. Goes to bed when we do. (Our average bed time is about one/two-ish (morning!) There are never enough hours in the day to do all the things we want.) But sometimes he doesn't go to sleep. Stays up and reads. Says we

are bad parents. Makes amazing Lego models, lots and lots. Writes loads of lists. Rides his bike. Plays with his friends. Makes rafts out of bits of wood and nails and string, to float down the River Mardle which is at the bottom of our garden. Loves anything to do with monsters and ghosts and dragons. Makes things out of clay. Collects crystals and stamps. He reads books on birds and monsters and magic and myths. He has taught himself to read and swim and ride his bike. I'm amazed.

"What do you want to do when you're a Man?", we ask. "I want to be a Hypnotist and an Artist and a Father." He's Brilliant!

And Barnaby. He is small and does a lot of the same stuff as Gus. His fav. things are clay and duplo and lego and magic potions and lots and lots of rough games. (Chucking on the bed and pillow fighting and tickling sessions.) He eats home-made vegetable soup and boiled eggs and oranges and lots and lots of sweets and bubble gum. Draws cats and snakes and fish. Wears no clothes at home. Builds castles with books and Cuisenaire rods. Loves us taking photos of him riding his new tricycle. Looks at our photograph albums. Walks up and down our road, at night with Alan, searching for the neighbourhood cats, in just a T-shirt. (Who cares what the neighbours say!)

"What do you want to be when you're a man?", we ask. "Man, me be Man." He's blue eyed and Brilliant!

AND SO TO LIBERTY...

A jazz standard - "The difficult, I'll do right now, the impossible will take a little while. Crazy they call me...."

We try to do the best for our young people, but we fall short of our ideals every-day. We think our little people are bright and wonderful and are equal to us big folk, and therefore should be given the respect and unconditional love they deserve. We've read Alice Miller and John Holt and A.S.Neill. We've gained from that. And now - the Big and Little Reids just live.

Belinda Rachel Reid - The Old House, 13 Station Road, Buckfastleigh, Wonderful, Wonderful, Devon. TQ11 0BU - 0364 643343

If you feel strongly about young peoples' rights and would like to move to Devon, please contact Sammy (my sister) and Nick Vidal-Hall - Homecroft, Brownston Street, Modbury, Devon. - 0548 830716. South Devon Co-ordinators.

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF INTELLIGENCE

I wanted to write this for two reasons. The first is that educating children at home can be a difficult and sometimes lonely business. It can sap at your self-confidence and throw you into periodic doubt about your ability to teach and the wisdom of withdrawing children from the system. This is particularly when you are faced with hostility, disapproval or simple incomprehension. The second is that society and the economy are going through huge changes and these are placing new demands on education and we have to think what this means for us as home-educators. Increasing numbers of critics are expressing concern at the failure of schools and are beginning to rethink the nature of education. In our favour, a great deal of the innovative and radical thinking around education indicates our choice to educate our children out of school.

Education and the acquisition of knowledge are at the forefront of these social changes, societies are becoming more orientated to knowledge and information. Education and training are now vital for economic development and efficiency. A byword for these changes is flexibility. The age of a single job for life is passing, part-time work is on the increase. They are driven by the changing nature of the capitalist market and its search for flexibility in labour. The results are not pleasant. Apart from mass unemployment, middle class salaries are forced down and job security is undermined, working class men's full-time work continues to disappear. More and more people feel frightened and insecure, struggling to survive with growing cut backs in welfare provision and safety nets. It's a scary time to be outside the system, but it can also feel exhilarating and full of opportunity. This is the world our children will grow up in and we have to try and equip them for it, give the kind of education which will provide them with the right social skills and knowledge to get on.

At the moment schools hold the monopoly over the transmission and production of knowledge. They're the key to getting a good start in life. Today we have been through the comprehensive system, we're now into opting out, but basically the problem remains the same. England, Wales and Northern Ireland have one of the worst educational systems in Europe. In higher education we have one of the lowest take up rates and one of the highest drop out rates. In a fast changing modern world, schools remain very old fashioned. They are relics from the Victorian age which sought to mass produce instruction; a mixture of factory, prison and asylum whose primary function has been custodial. The Victorian mass schooling system inculcated time-keeping on its pupils, it standardised syllabuses and enforced regular time-periods. It was a simulated factory, training workers for manufacturing. It did not educate, its primary task was to churn out obedient and deferential subjects.

Today the need for a more educated workforce has geared the system to exams. Schools are organised around academic attainment, which is viewed as the sole criteria of success. But what is the purpose of GCSEs? They qualify a school student to go on and sit 'A'-levels and 'A'-levels provide the possibility of entry into University. They are academic and educational achievements with very little relationship to the world outside. They qualify people for nothing further than continuing in the system. But they are immensely important because they are the effective means of distributing economic opportunity and give schools a huge amount of power in the allocation of occupations and associated income and status. By privileging academic credentials over all other forms of knowledge schools perpetuate a narrow conception of learning and directly contribute to the gross inequalities of the education and class system.

Despite often liberal intentions, schools are institutions which fail the majority of their pupils. Claus Moser's National Commission on Education found that school students wanted to learn, but they were disenchanted with school.

- * Over half say that most of the time they don't want to go to school **
- * One in four thinks teachers are too easily satisfied **
- * One in four admits to playing truant **
- * One in five denies being happy at school **

BUT AT THE SAME TIME :

- * Over 90% think school work is worth doing **
- * Over 95% think schools should teach things useful for jobs **
- * Over 97% say their parents think it important to do well at school **

The problem with education is the schools, not young people's lack of motivation. In these circumstances, compulsory schooling only increases children's frustration and undermines their interest in knowledge and their capacity to develop self-motivated forms of learning.

Schools and classrooms are very difficult to change. In the 1970s Ivan Illich wrote about deschooling society. (Education Otherwise is a practice and an organisation which is a result of his innovative work.) Illich argued that schools contained a hidden curriculum which encouraged intellectual and ideological conformity and acquiescence to authority. It didn't matter if the teacher was a liberal or an authoritarian, the power relation between pupil and teacher would remain. During the 1960s, the American educationalist Phillip Jackson, developed tests for measuring creativity. It was a new angle on the nature of intelligence. One day the head of a High School phoned him up. He had given the tests to the whole school and put together a class consisting of the most creative pupils and the most creative teachers; would Jackson like to come and see the result? Jackson duly sat at the back of the class. What struck him most was that nothing had changed, the classroom experience seemed designed to inhibit learning and creativity. Jackson stopped

writing about creativity tests and instead wrote a book about classroom life.

Schooling and education are deeply conservative institutions. It's what is happening outside them that is forcing change. New forms of information technology are likely to divorce knowledge from the education institutions. This is already happening with the Open University and in smaller examples such as EO. For example, video and audio tapes will link interactive computers to film. Internet provides opportunities for the exchange of information, distance learning challenges the space and time of schooling. Education has to address this information revolution because schools and universities will increasingly lose their monopoly over knowledge. The problem with schools is their paternalistic and hierarchical culture. Their function of controlling curriculums and the acquisition of knowledge makes it very hard for them to respond to this revolution in a creative way. The old fashioned format of the classroom where the teacher is seen as the font of knowledge undermines childrens autonomy and ability to start thinking critically about the information which is flooding their everyday lives.

The Tory Government has spent hundreds of millions of pounds developing the national curriculum only to hand the shambles over to Sir Ron Dearing to rethink it. The American educationalist Howard Gardner has argued that for all the vast expense and time taken to reform western education systems, very little has been said about the purposes of education. He argues that education should be principally about the understanding of various disciplines and the world we live in. By understanding, he means; "the capacity to apply knowledge, facts, concepts and skills in new situations where they are appropriate." Unless school students can apply what they have learnt in new situations, there is no evidence that they have understood. He goes on, "Having defined the goal of understanding, we must face the bitter truth that most students in schools all over the world do not understand."

Schools are supposed to teach us better, deeper ways of thinking about the world. But he argues that students, particularly good students learn only to regurgitate what they have been taught and do not change their underlying beliefs. He argues that inside everyone is the mind of a five year old struggling to get out. This mind and the forms of learning it was engaged in, are largely ignored by school which imposes a narrow and over-formalised system of instruction on children. Once removed from school they revert to the more robust ideas they have inherited from their class and familial culture. Gardner argues that we must rethink the nature of intelligence if we are to devise different institutions and cultures of learning and understanding which will enhance individual and social development.

Existing schooling concentrates upon two forms of intelligence, logical - mathematical intelligence and linguistic intelligence, despite only a minority of people ever excelling in them. Gardner argues that there are other forms of intelligence which the educational system more or less ignores:

musical intelligence
spatial intelligence
bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence
personal intelligence, of which there are two kinds;
interpersonal intelligence that recognises how to understand other
people and the intra-personal intelligence of self-understanding.

David Hargreaves, former Chief Inspector of the ILEA and now Chairman of the Committee on the Training and Development of University Teachers puts these categories into more understandable language:

cognitive-intellectual
aesthetic-artistic
affective-emotional
physical-manual
personal-social.

(*'The Mosaic of Learning: Schools and Teachers for the Next Century'*)

Schooling ignores the greater part of people's intelligence and capacity for knowledge and understanding. They cannot measure intuition, or empathy, nor the perceptiveness that accompany these forms of intelligence. They cannot measure musical and artistic imagination or the capacity of people to project themselves in space and time and imagine futures or histories. These are the kind of skills which are needed in a post-industrial society. But the educational system rests on what is empirical, quantifiable and what can be tested.

Gardner argues that to foster people's intelligences the idea of an individual-centred school needs to be developed which will recognise each student's 'cognitive profile' and their mix of different forms of intelligence. Such an approach emphasises the old pedagogic approach to learning: one to one conversation. The educational ideal is a two-way dialogue, an extension of conversation. Gardner's ideas are to maximise conversational learning and minimise the schooling influenced 'instructional' element. Whatever our individual practices, EO has been engaging in this form of pedagogy since its inception.

I'd like to see EO engage with these changes. There is the danger that they will be used to bolster a Margaret Thatcher style enterprise culture of dog eat dog. A lot of educationalists ignore social inequality as a key factor in educational achievement, children from poor families or from working class families are at much greater disadvantage than children from middle class and/or wealthy families. I'd like to see EO as part of a culture based on society, not self-interested individualism, where the market is our servant and society supports and protects people with mutual aid. It's a society where maximum diversity is achieved with the minimum amount of inequality. There isn't really an ending to this, I wrote it because of my own private struggles educating my son at home and the feeling that this effort was divorced from wider collective and political issues. I wanted to make that connection partly as a way of breaking down a feeling of isolation, I hope it has helped other people who may feel the same. Maybe I could finish by suggesting we persuade the Labour

Party to change its mind and keep the EO clause which it has said it will abolish. Not only would that save us, it would be a small victory for pluralism over paternalism. Write to your local MP and to the shadow Education person Anne Taylor at the House of Commons, SW1.

Further information about Hargreaves' book and the ideas of Howard Gardner from Demos 9, Bridewell Place, London, EC4V 6AP.



Jonathan Rutherford, 40 Thorpedale Rd, London, N4 3BL.

Tel:- 071 272 4756

Book Reviews



Some of the best hallowe`en books reviewed by Mariella Price

The Chimney Witches by Victoria Whitehead (Corgi)

Ellen is the main character in the story who befriends Rufus and Weird Hannah, two witches who live in her chimney. It is set in and around the time of hallowe`en and takes a light-hearted look into the world of witchery and magic. Ellen is caught up in all kinds of adventures in and around the time running up to hallowe`en and the big celebrations at the hallowe`en revelries, where witches and ghouls gather to celebrate hallowe`en itself. People from `the real world` are strictly forbidden, or are they? A very enjoyable book with superb illustrations. Suitable for 9 - 11 year olds.

A Bad Spell For The Worst Witch by Jill Murphy (Young Puffins)

Mildred Hubble is the worst witch who gets up to yet more mischief and trouble in the second of Jill Murphy`s trilogy of Worst Witch books.

In her second year at Miss Cackle`s Academy for Witches she tries to lose her reputation as worst witch. But can she with the likes of Ethel Hallow and Miss Hardbroom about who`ve had it in for her ever since she first stepped foot in the school? Beautifully illustrated by the author. Suitable for children aged 8-10 or those who`ve developed reading stamina.

Room 13 by Robert Swindells (Yearling)

There is something strange about room 13. As soon as they arrive at the guesthouse Fliss notices something sinister, that something is wrong.

The night before going on the school trip she has a dream, a dream about a house with a room 13. When they arrive, the guesthouse looks exactly like the one in her dream, except for one important detail: there is no room 13, or so it seems.

As the story unfolds, Fliss gets more suspicious, she thinks the night she heard noises from the linen cupboard was just a dream; but when Ellie-May starts behaving strangely she changes her mind. An excellent book from award-winning writer Robert Swindells. suitable for 9 - 13 year olds.

In Black and White and other stories by Jan Mark (Puffin)

This is a collection of nine short stories by Carnegie Medal winner Jan Mark. Each story tells of something strange and creepy. Enough to send a shiver up anyone`s spine. Jan Mark has an unmistakable talent for writing; all in all a thoroughly good book. Suitable for children aged 11+.

Fungus the Bogeyman by Raymond Briggs (Picture Puffins)

A classic in its own right. Deserves to be on every child's bookshelf. Thoroughly un-categorisable and in-describable. Thoroughly disgusting and utterly brilliant. Like one of the reviews on the back cover you need a strong stomach and a quick eye which I think summarises it perfectly. Raymond Briggs takes us, in intricately detailed drawings and descriptions, through a day in the life of Fungus the bogeyman and helps to paint a portrait of true bogey life. Exquisitely funny, a recommended book for people of all ages.

Book Review: New Format `Lib-Ed` Magazine, `Play.`

Gold stars all round to the Lib-Ed collective for evolving into a handy size A4 1/2 magazine. This issue displays a sepia-subtle photo of a bare-foot tot, enjoying herself with a beach and bucket. `Play`, the subject of issue 24, (Lib-Ed is in its radical 26th year) is lovingly embraced in all its wonderous and complex facets: the need to play, the psychology of play, the prison of the play-ground, games children play (from rude rhymes to virtual reality) and the Lib-Ed chesnut, `The Liberation of Learning.`

Lib-Ed has been informing us on these matters for long enough to really know what they are doing. Their new format is a good blend of instruction and entertainment with material that is both provocative and fun to read.

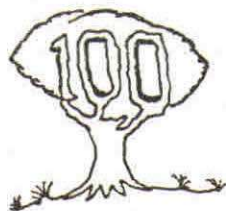
Articles on new projects in the US, Japan and India give a global perspective.

Closer to home, I looked in vain for a perspective on `Home Education and Play.` The fact that home educated children, particularly those pursuing an autonomous education, spending many hours occupied with play, seems highly relevant to this issue's subject matter. Play is the meeting point of science and art. In order to invent we must first imagine.

O. K., 9 gold stars and a B+, nobody's perfect. Never-the-less, I recommend subscribing now, telling your friends and by all means submitting articles on `The Liberation of Home Education` for future issues.

Poppy Green

`Lib-Ed` 3 issues £ 5. 50
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29.

WHEN THEY WON'T DO ANYTHING

I have read with real sympathy the letters in recent magazines from homeschoolers who are in despair because they cannot get their children to do anything which they recognise as 'learning', not only for a few weeks when the children first come out of school, but for months and even years after that.

I do not underestimate the depth of concern they must feel, because, unlike me, they are parents for life. Their sense of responsibility for their children's happiness persists long after they have any power to do anything about it. Inevitably they come to believe that if their children grow up to be people whom Society thinks ill of, either because of their life-style or their behaviour, it is because they, the parents, are failures.

This apprehension, this life-long fear of failing with one's children powerfully - and understandably - limits the extent of the freedom which many of us feel able to give them when we choose to withdraw them from school. I think it is a decent and honourable fear, but I also think that the time has come to grasp the nettle and try to dislodge it, because it is also an anti-educational fear, which can do as much harm in the long term as it seems to avert in the short term.

So let me be unambiguous: I am quite certain, on the basis of my own experience as a child and later as an educator, that children who do not choose to do what we want them to do, particularly when it comes to organising their learning, are neither sick nor stupid. They know themselves better than anyone else, and if they need to do nothing, or at least, nothing we adults can recognise as 'education', then we can be sure that putting pressure on them will only make things worse.

The reason for the appearance of torpor and lack of interest in some children is, I believe, that they do not know what it feels like to direct their own thinking. If left to do so they become bewildered and directionless, like rudderless motor-boats. It may take a very long time for them to build a different steering mechanism, and while they are doing so they will not easily be persuaded to take unnecessary risks. Learning to use one's mind involves making a great many tentative trials of the surrounding world, experiencing their consequences, both happy and painful, and trying to establish from them a pattern from which they can predict not only the shape of future events, but also the kind of emotions they will have if they do similar things again.

Most children do not have the chance to do much of this experimenting. From the start of their schooling someone tells them what the world is like, and what will happen if they do any of the limited range of activities which the school allows them. They also learn from their teachers that there is generally only one way to do any given task, and that they will be safest if they don't try any funny business of their own. I know this sounds grouchy and self-indulgent, but the point is, it's true. If you don't believe me, try suggesting to a group of teachers that there are, for instance many different ways of doing subtraction or learning to read, and that they should let their pupils discover the one which works best for them. You will not

be received sympathetically.

So, spending years in school tends to disable children's power to use their minds in their own way. That may be a virtue if you don't actually want them to be free-thinkers (and most adults probably don't, particularly if they are politicians) but if you don't provide them with plenty of more or less undemanding activity to occupy their otherwise fallow minds you cannot expect them not to be bored.

I don't know exactly how any particular parent should go about coping with the problems posed by his or her child. If I had to issue general advice to the waiting world I should be inclined to say that the best thing to do is to master one's anxiety as best one can and leave Nature and time to finish the job. Even though a child may seem to be wasting his or her time, I believe you can safely assume that something, which you cannot possibly know or appreciate, is going on in his or her mind, and that in the end that 'something' will grow into a truly independent and satisfying grasp of the world.

I can't 'prove' any of this: the world would be a happier and safer place for children if I could. I can only suggest that if you know by all the deepest instincts you possess that you have done the right thing in taking your children out of school, if you know by talking to them that they approve of what you have done, and if you are serious about trusting and respecting their minds you will find the courage to go on allowing them the freedom to conduct the whole of their lives as they feel they should.

I know it's hard, perhaps almost impossibly hard to do this, but I want to say that I believe firmly that it's the right way. If I had children I should give them the all the rights over their mind, including the right to daydream and do nothing all day if they wanted to.

Christopher R. Shute
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EO / Green and Away Camp in the Malverns (15 July – 23rd)

Having just returned from my first EO Camp (in fact my first meeting of other EOers), I want to write about some of my impressions.

Straight away I have to say I found it one of the most relaxing weeks I've had in years. The weather was wonderful — hot and sunny practically all day every day. The setting was beautiful — high on a hill overlooking the Vale of Evesham, surrounded by fields, a common and backed by woods.

The camp was organised by Green and Away, an environmental charity. The first time, I was told, that an outside organisation had 'hosted' an EO gathering. For me, it worked well (but, of course, I don't have anything to compare it with). One of the aims of Green and Away was to leave the field in as good a condition as it was before they came, preferably better. There were no rubbish bins — everything was reused, or burned, or buried, or sent for recycling, or composted. The waste from one of the toilets fed surrounding willow trees which, we were told, would show their appreciation by shooting up within no time. Windmills powered a couple of lights. The water was pure Malvern Spring Water.

The food was mainly organic produce. All done on open fires. The smell of baking bread from the half-buried 'Bread Express' oven promised delights to come.

There was some misunderstandings at first between the EOers and the Green and Away people, particularly around domestic arrangements. They felt we weren't pulling our weight with regard to washing up and meal preparations. There was, I think, a feeling amongst some EOers of not wanting to overstep Green and Away's boundaries — the kitchen (a beautiful round structure made of hurdles and sacking) particularly felt like their space. But things got better about midweek when all our expectations got aired.

Green and Away were taken aback by the high number of under 5s, apparently unusual for EO gatherings. As a single parent of a nearly three year old, I was really pleased to have several other people in my position to discuss things with. There was a high number of families who'd never been to an EO gathering before.

One of the best things for me was being able to live with a group of people who accepted and welcomed children as part of the group. At home I sometimes feel isolated because there's a lot of things I can't do, or can only do with difficulty, because I have a young child — people assume I want to put him in a creche or nursery so I can get on and do things, but here there was so much to do together, or near each other. (And I felt he was safe so I could let down my guard a bit.)

Seeing the older children was an eye-opener for me. They seemed to lack the self-consciousness I associated with adolescents — both with each other and with adults. They seemed to feel at ease with people younger and older than themselves. They weren't patronised and didn't do the same to the younger ones. They seemed to have an openness that made me feel sad for the lost possibilities of my own adolescence.

Sweat lodges, mud baths, solar-heated showers in the open air, a session looking at the moon and Jupiter through a powerful telescope, a wonderful two-hour musical jamming session, three birthday cakes, story-telling at night, balmy evenings round a moonlight campfire...

What I would have liked was more discussions / stories about home educating. This happened once towards the end of the week but I would've liked to have heard more.

Other people said they would have liked better prepared workshops and activities.

I met some lovely children and adults. I am more determined than ever to home educate my son — I feel there are some good role models out there for him. Thanks to Pam Stevenson and Green and Away for organising it all. Let's hope they will have us back next year.

Sue Backhouse

To teach or not to teach?

By Jean Smith

Re: the debate on structure versus non-structure, I have much sympathy with both viewpoints, but I would like to make a few comments of my own.

Although I agree that farming is a far more natural existence than an office worker who does not even take account of the seasons, farming is not a natural way of life. It is an imposition of man on nature, allowing only the seasons to rule over man's activities, although by the use of greenhouses, hydroponics etc, even this aspect of nature is no longer the consideration it once was. Nature has patterns, but no rigid structure; these are inventions of man.

Very primitive societies (both current and historically) of the hunter/gatherer type do not have structure imposed by agriculture - no crops to plant, no animals to milk. Seasons are the only structure from without. Such societies allow/ed children to learn as they wanted - no demands would be made of them until adulthood - usually around 12 or 13 years old, although they would be free to imitate, participate, ask questions etc. On reaching adulthood they would be expected to choose a speciality if they had a particular interest - such as flint knapper, healer, storyteller, shaman (and so on), and to serve an 'apprenticeship' but still be a participant in the main activities of the unit - hunting, gathering, cooking, preserving etc. Incidentally, the older societies in Europe did not appear to divide tasks between the sexes. The unit (clan, tribe) would work together throughout the warmer months to provide for immediate needs and for storage to survive the winter. Winter was a time of restricted mobility - the tribe would often be 'indoors' for weeks at a time. All members would use the time for sewing, leather making, tool and utensil making and craft work.

Less primitive societies, those which practise some form of animal husbandry and/or agriculture, impose more structure on their society, often with children as young as 3 expected to take an active part in productive activities, although, as in modern farming, there is a point to this structure.

However, I have many reservations about this structure. Structure is man's way of controlling nature; its purpose is to make the world fit man, instead of man fitting the world. Structure makes things efficient;

structure allows you to pick your apples from an orchard, instead of spending time foraging in the wilds; structure means you milk your animals once a day and then store the product - to then consume a product which is totally unnatural to man. Man is the only mammal which habitually:

- a. Consumes the milk of other species.
- b. Consumes milk once past infancy.

(Cats normally only do the above under the influence of man.)

N.B. I am not proposing that we should return to a hunter/gatherer existence; that would totally impractical in the modern world. However, I think that such societies have much to teach us about a natural way of life.

My own opinion is that children learn best in an unstructured way; but they need to be frequently exposed to the things we want them to learn. Children who see and do nothing, learn nothing.

However, if your lifestyle demands structure, then the children will learn that structure and apply it to future life. There is nothing wrong in this; it does not preclude our being able to equip our children for the future by allowing them to be intellectually flexible, creative and self-reliant; above all by not suppressing or restraining the joy of learning that all our children are born with. The worst scenario would be to impose a structure with no apparent purpose - the 'you will learn this because I say so' method which so many of our schools seem to favour. Children will learn without apparent motive or purpose - but only when they want to, which is not always when you want them to. (I have been known to decline to answer questions on the meaning of life at 3.00 am)

They are also will to learn if there is purpose, although perhaps, not so readily as otherwise.

The significance of all this is that man is a very adaptable creature; both viewpoints have validities. The important point of all this is that we do the best we can for our children based on our own beliefs and lifestyles and not leave it to others. After all, provided that each method is based on caring, a child brought up one way will not be better or worse than that same child brought up another way, they will just be different - and it really does take all sorts to make a world!

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Telephone (01934) 414166

TOWARDS THE 21ST CENTURY

EO now has around around 2,500 members and a turnover approaching £40,000 a year. Our membership is changing rapidly: over 50% of EO's members have joined within the past two years. The costs of running EO are high and financial planning is necessary in order to make the organisation stable and financially secure. EO's legal structure consists of a company limited by guarantee and a charitable trust. These two entities have gradually grown apart, and we are now in a position where the charitable work of EO is wholly carried out by the limited company and the charitable trust is dormant and about to be wound up by the trustees. Thus at the EO meeting in York in July a finance group was set up in order to consider the position, to provide information, make some recommendations and draw up a financial plan.

Between us we have spoken to a tax inspector, Newcastle Business Link, Interchange, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), various charities including the NSPCC and Friends of the Earth, the Charity Commissioners, a company lawyer and the charity specialist at the leading accountancy firm of Touche Ross. Much professional advice has been obtained at no cost to EO, and each specialist has strongly recommended that the limited company should seek to obtain charitable status. This advice was also given several years ago by Reeves and Neylan, EO's former auditors.

We recommend that EO should apply to the Charity Commission for registration as a charitable company limited by guarantee. This would be a simple administrative change which would be in keeping with EO's voluntary ethos as a self-help organisation. Most other charitable organisations are organised in this way, for example the YMCA, Oxfam, Shelter and Age Concern. The implications of this course of action are summarised in the following questions and answers:

What benefits would charitable status bring to EO?

The tax advantages would be considerable. EO members who are taxpayers could covenant their subscriptions to the organisation, and around a third of the amount of the donation made by each

covenant would then be paid to EO by the Inland Revenue. Individuals would also be able to donate money to EO and get tax relief on their payments through a Payroll Giving Scheme, if one is operated where they work and through Gift Aid. This would bring in much needed extra funds at no cost to our members.

Also, if EO were a registered charity we would be able to apply for funds from the thousands of grant-making trusts which can only donate to charitable organisations. Sums in excess of £28,000 have actually been offered to EO in the recent past which EO limited has had to refuse because it does not have charitable status!

As a charity would EO still be free (if necessary) to engage in political campaigning?

Yes. In a booklet (no: CC9 available free from any Charity Commission office) issued by the Charity Commissioners on Political Campaigning the Commissioners make it clear that "an organisation whose purposes are charitable may engage in activities which are directed at securing, or opposing, changes in the law or in government policy or decisions, whether in this country or abroad". So we can have charitable status and still campaign for home education if necessary.

Charities cannot engage in commercial activity. Would this restriction be a problem?

No. The normal practice for voluntary organisations with charitable status is for them to set up a trading company which handles all their commercial activities. All profits are covenanted to the charitable organisation which undertakes the main work of the group. Thus EO's self-help activities would continue as always, but funding would come from the profits of the trading company. The directors of the trading company would be appointed by the directors of the charitable company, so there would be complete security of the members' interests.

What happens if we decide to stay as we are?

We have been advised by Newcastle Business Link that there are

changes to company law in the pipeline which will make it impossible for EO to continue in its present form. The Charities Acts of 1992 and 1993, which are being implemented in stages, will also require us to make changes. We are going to have to change anyway, so why wait?

EO must be prepared to be adaptable and forward looking if it is to remain viable and relevant to the changing needs of its members. The alternative is stagnation and eventual extinction. Historically, EO has evolved as it has grown but the process can be difficult; the minutes show that there was some resistance to the Central Office volunteer having an answerphone! The changes that we propose would obviously have to be phased in over time but they would provide funding which would bring great benefits for all members. There is an urgent need for a Central Office which would relieve overburdened EO families of routine office work, the volume of which is getting too large for volunteers to handle. The problem of GCSE will not go away, and we could consider applying for grants to set up regional resource centres which could also serve as examination centres. Funds could be used to support social gatherings, conferences, children's workshops, international links with other home education organisations and legal training.

This matter concerns us all as it is of great importance to the future of EO - and to the children of future members who have yet to experience the joy of learning at home. Please let us have your comments as soon as possible, as we will be making a proposal to the EGM at Newcastle in November that EO limited should seek registration with the Charity Commission. If you cannot come but would like to vote on the proposal, it is very important that you contact Sue Clare (General Secretary - address on inside back cover of this newsletter) and ask for details of the procedure.

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Deadline for next issue 1st November.

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EO Stationery: Envelope re-use labels £2.00 for 100. Leaflets, handbills, posters, forms and car stickers are freely available for publicity purposes. Available from Lucy Charlton, Church Lane Cottages, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire, LE8 0FT.

"Growing Without Schooling", the American home education magazine, is available from Barbara Sheppard, 18 Queen Katherine Street, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 7OG. Subscriptions run from March to March. No part subs or back issues available. Members £12, non-members £14. Cheques payable to EO

The following publications are available from Pat Dixon, 110 Cambridge Street, Wolverton, Milton Keynes, MK12 5AH. Prices quoted are for members only. Please add 10% of total order towards postage to UK addresses. Cheques payable to "Education Otherwise".

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