

**Education Otherwise**

A More  
Structured  
Approach

Newsletter 124 - October 1998

## The Next Issue

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The Deadline for Contributions is:

**1st November 1998**

Please include your name, address and telephone number and mark material '*For Publication*'. Contributions are more likely to be included if they are concise and it would be helpful if they were typed. Some Editors may be able to accept material on disc.

There will be special sections on the following subjects;

### **Special Needs**

November '98, deadline 1st Oct

### **The Performing Arts**

January '99, deadline 1st December

Please share your experiences and expertise with other members and send your contributions as soon as possible to:

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### **Editing the Newsletter**

The Newsletter is edited by volunteers. If you would like to know more, please contact the Newsletter Coordinator. We currently need Editors from the **June '99** issue onwards.

**If your newsletter does not arrive,** check with Janet Wilkinson, who maintains the database.

## Editorial

Hello to everyone! Welcome to the October edition of the Newsletter, this time on "A More Structured Approach". Structure seems to have gotten a bad reputation – people feel it means "stifling", "confining", "limiting". I am aware of the structure around us – in nature and within ourselves, no matter how much you say "we don't have any structure", your family will most likely sleep when tired, eat when hungry and exist within a framework of people and places that you know (rather being tossed from place to place within a chaotic system). Structure to me is what enables people to feel confident (a baby cries and builds a structure of the world based on "I cry, they come") and to grow emotionally and physically. All relationships have structure.

We are the Heywood family and occasionally call ourselves "Heywood Home School". I am Wendrie, am married to Vincent and we knew we were going to keep our kids home from school before we had kids, since then Matthew (now six) and Leah (now four) have joined us on our learning journey. We gave our family a school name so that when Matthew was asked where he went to school, he could give a reply that the asker could understand. Most didn't actually listen to the reply as long as there was one – they just didn't like the more truthful response "I don't go to school!" Curriculum wise we don't use one, I have a reading list with activity ideas that we delve into when Leah wants to do "proper school" but that rarely last more than a day or so.

As a family we are Quakers (although Vin denies any label for anything) which I feel has given me skills that I have thought were very useful this month, as the last edition caused some strong emotions and thinking in people – always a good thing, as long as people don't take personal offense at the differences between us. It is a reflection on how broad a base of support for "Educating Otherwise" there is, that there are so many different reasons for **and** ways of doing it. I am sorry that I couldn't print every letter and article that was sent - I have tried to keep a balance between the responses – and have even managed a bit of humour. We love books and quotes so there is a selection scattered throughout – I have volunteered to edit another edition this time on books – so if you have any favourites then mail a review to me and I will hang onto them until Sue gives me another chance! Thanks again to everyone who rang and wrote. It was great meeting so many other EOers and finding out what happens in their families.

Wendrie Heywood, 18 Bedford Road, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5LS

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## **A More Structured Approach.**

Harrogate,

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**Dear EO,**

We had awaited the arrival of the August Newsletter with great anticipation to read about the experiences of others who also struggle with the lifestyle that is 'Autonomous Education', sharing the highs and lows. We were profoundly disappointed with what we read. Autonomous education does not totally preclude teaching, what it precludes is imposed teaching, children can decide to learn something, and go to someone for lessons to learn it, or even use work books; children don't have to climb trees all day or engage solely in fantasy play in order to qualify as autonomously educated. The aim of the Newsletter we had always believed was to provide encouragement for members of EO, what we were treated to was a manifesto for the Libertarian Family Network. Rather than being a forum for mutual support the editor used it as a platform for her own ideology. We quote Wendy Pledsted's letter from the April Newsletter describing how EO should be 'a place where we can be assured of never having to defend or justify our style of education, or parenting skills or our very lifestyle. It should be a safe haven for our families to be who we are, with confidence and without fear of being judged and found wanting ...'. The tone of some parts of the August Newsletter tended to undermine the confidence of those who do not accept the libertarian outlook, even those of us who do practise autonomous education.

Yours sincerely **Martine Archer (Harrogate), Meropy Barker (Handforth), Alan Birks, Lesley Blackshaw (Cheshire), Jane Fernandez (Stockport), Julie Ridley (Chorlton), L. Sutton (Chorlton) & Gill Wilson (Stockport).**

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### **Autonomous vs Coercive Parenting**

I read, with interest, Sammy Vidal-Hall's article on autonomous learning. I would like to put forward another view. I do agree with certain elements of the article, for example children learning best what they are most interested in, and that imagination is more important than knowledge, however, the desire to please parents is not a requirement that all parents instil in their children at some level "... which is deeply manipulative, coercive and damaging ...". It is a deeply embedded part of human nature. At root level, a person needs to have their physical needs met (food, shelter) and at the next level they need security and safety. A child who is given only these, however, will fail to develop normally. In order to develop as a social being a baby needs love and acceptance. A sense of belonging. Is a parent being manipulative by smiling and loving the baby, causing the child to enjoy the positive encounters? I don't think so!

On the next level (this is where I differ from Maslow) a child needs growth and interest, leading to the next level, which is a sense of significance. I won't go further than that here. Suffice to say that as parents we should be aware of the physical, psychological and emotional needs of our children. We should take care to provide for them, and accept responsibility for them. That, alone, gives us a natural authority over those precious people in our care.

There is no such thing as a parent who has no influence on their children. When we try to "force" our ideas on our children they may well rebel against them, and when we try not to influence them at all they will still absorb much of who we are into their own lives and understanding.

A person who rebels against any 'norm' of behaviour in the society they live in does not find himself without 'norms', but simply exchanges one set of norms for another. Libertarian parents may not think they have rules but in fact they do ... they are looser, less well-defined, but they are still there. Perhaps they are defined as being "to prevent the child from injury" (for example not allowing a child to simply run across a busy road) but no matter which way you look at it, a child does have to have a certain amount of parental authority, control, guidance - call it what you wish. A child with no parameters, rules or boundaries is a child without society. Some may think boundaries are unnecessary, even abhorrent, but they still have them, and children still need them. No parent who professes to love their child will allow that child to come to physical harm or to harm others.

Our boundaries include not only rules for avoiding physical harm, but also emotional harm. Specifically the hurt that comes with being rejected by society for unacceptable, disruptive behaviour. Rules do not need to be written or even spoken to be classified as rules. In fact most rules are unspoken and internalised from our environment, as are our values and morals.

Many home educated children who have never been to school think school is a prison, a dreadful place. How do they know? By parental influence, of course. I find myself influencing my children against school, but they have already been and have favourable experiences. If they really wanted to go back, we would let them, but then they would be expected to take responsibility for their choice and stick it out ... well, at least for one term! They would pick up the jargon, ideals, morals and probably behaviour of their peer groups - not because anyone directly teaches them these things, but because they would want to feel a sense of belonging.

Our way of life becomes part of our children's culture and ideology. Authority is not something we take by force, but is a God-given responsibility toward our children. There has to be balance.

I fully agree that children should be free to make choices which affect their lives ... as and when they are able to be accountable for those choices. An authoritative parent is not the same as an authoritarian one. The authoritarian parent puts obedience above all personal liberty. The

authoritative parent, on the other hand, uses wisdom and maturity to guide and protect ... whilst at the same time nurturing the child's individuality and preferences. We are always accountable to others, to society in general, and ultimately to God himself

**Gayle Joubert (Whitchurch Hill, Oxon)**

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### **Autonomy vs. Structure: some arguments in favour of a more structured approach**

I have four children ranging in age from 4 to 12, and have been home educating for nearly four years. During this time I have given a lot of thought to educational styles, but have concluded that autonomous education is not in the best interests of children.

As an educator of my children, I see my duty as being twofold: to give them access to knowledge which will inspire and enrich them for its own sake, and to prepare them for an adult life in which a variety of doors will be open to them, so that if one turns out to be a blind alley, others will be available. If this means that Maths GCSE, for example, would be an advantage when it comes to job-seeking or higher education, then we have to accept this and work towards it. They may not particularly enjoy it, but I am confident that when the time comes they will be glad to have done it. Maybe they would be just as 'happy' without the Maths GCSE, but I'm not prepared to experiment with their longer term well-being in order to find out, and risk their not being adequately prepared to earn a living. No one can pursue their dreams if they can't afford to keep a roof over their head.

I have to have a structured day simply to make sure I cover everything I think is necessary, especially with four children all working at different levels. I want to make sure that I'm not giving too much weight to one area at the expense of others, and that important skills and areas of knowledge are not missed out. Although I try not to impose too rigid a regime on my children, they work within a structured framework. Basically, our day consists of basic skills and languages in the mornings, and sciences or other humanities in the afternoons. The children readily accept this routine, not only because they see the value of it and get a sense of satisfaction from working hard, but also because by and large they enjoy their work, and feel they're achieving something. I feel that a sense of achievement is greatly lacking in many children today, and leads to people not feeling good about themselves.

We use a variety of resources to try to make learning as interesting as possible for the children, and to make their day varied to some extent: CD-ROMs, encyclopaedias, the internet, videos, grandparents and yes! - the dreaded textbook. I don't really see how you can learn effectively without using textbooks to some extent - but we do supplement these with as wide a range of other books and materials as we can manage.

While I do take into account the children's preferences when it comes to deciding which topics to cover and when, I would feel that I was failing them if I left all the decision-making to them. Children are apprentice adults, and need guidance from adults. All of us, including adults but particularly children, greatly benefit by having our lives enriched by the initiative, experience and inspiration of others. Obviously children are going to learn much more effectively if they are interested in what they are supposed to be learning, and I consider that stimulating my children's interests is one of my most important roles as an educator and parent. Looking back on my own childhood, it would have been dull indeed if I had been left to set my own course. Areas of knowledge which I wouldn't have known existed would have remained closed to me, to my detriment. In my view, to expect children to determine their own educational life is asking far more than is reasonable, and much too great a burden to place on them - how can they be equipped to do this? What are parents for, if not to guide and teach their offspring in the light of their own, much greater, experience?

Often, it is only after studying a subject in some depth that its interest can be really appreciated. Many subjects are unrewarding in their early stages, and it often takes time and perseverance to get into a subject. I see part of my job as an educator as being to take my children through those early stages so that they perceive the interest and excitement behind the slog. Also, the sense of satisfaction they get from persisting with something difficult usually leads on to greater interest in the subject, and greatly increases their self-confidence. Left to themselves, they would undoubtedly have given up - I have many times had to insist that they persevered. This is not easy, either for parents or children. However, once something is mastered in this way the next problem is much less daunting. I feel it is very important for children to learn that nothing worthwhile is achieved without patience and discipline.

If children are educated in a 'non-autonomous' way, there is still plenty of freedom far more than a child would have at school. I would certainly agree that children need time just to be themselves and to follow up interests of their own, and my children have time allocated in their work schedule to do this. Also, having a 'curriculum' needn't be threatening - we have found that by simply going back to basic principles in a particular subject area we will eventually have covered most of the GCSE material. I would say that my children enjoy 90% of their work, not only for its intrinsic interest but because as they get older they begin to see the value of it and its relationship to other work they are doing and to life in general. However, I am sure that they would not have got to anywhere near this point if much of the initiative had not come from outside themselves.

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## A Structured Approach

I have been home educating my two children, Alistair (now 8) and Charlotte (now 11) for 3 1/2 years. When my children were small I had no plans to home educate them. My daughter Charlotte started school bright, happy, secure and keen to learn - three years at school changed her to an unhappy, unconfident and lazy girl. The story will be familiar to many. Charlotte is slightly dyslexic. The school completely failed to recognise it, when I forced them to accept, it they could/would not help her enough.

Up to this point I had helped Charlotte after school. Although she found school boring, she enjoyed several after-school activities e.g. swimming, dancing, (by an after school activity I mean a specialist activity that is run by an individual, sports club or local council in a specialist subject outside school time.) At one point, during her time at school, I cut down on the after school activities to see if that would help her at school, it didn't. Gradually I came to realise, what I now feel very strongly, that the after school activities were more important than school; they are taught by specialists who have an enthusiasm and a knowledge of how to teach the subject rather than the all roundness of Primary school teachers. Also these groups are much smaller than a class size of 28 plus - they also often have schemes, such as the ASA grading awards for swimming, that give the children an aim and great sense of achievement, when they are awarded their certificates. So going to school followed by an activity did not leave Charlotte much time to play and me to help her with her English. School had just become a child care service. Alistair was due to start school. Using the reading books I had bought for his

sister he had taught himself to read. If he was to attend school they would put him on a first reader regardless of his ability thus destroying his confidence and sense of achievement - I was not repeating my mistake again. I decided to home educate them for a term only - the house was up for sale, our initial plan was to send them to a new school the following September. But home educating using a structured approach has enabled both children to develop so well emotionally, socially, intellectually and physically that we decided to continue to the time Charlotte started secondary school which should have been September 98 but once again we are reluctant to give up the benefits so we have decided to continue for another two years.

We have what many EOers would call a structured day, though compared with school it would be regarded as an unstructured approach. We have an aim to do between two to three hours formal work per school day. We tend to keep to school terms because often there are various activities going on in the school holidays: for example football academies, tennis tournaments. When we do the 2 to 3 hours varies, living in the middle of Dartmoor we have to make the most of any fine weather. Outside of these hours we often do other activities, such as cooking, model making, library visits. Then of course there are the after school activities

It is very hard to describe how we do our work. We have a belief that the children sometimes need to be taught formally and that they cannot decide when they are so young what is best for them. They do not have sufficient knowledge and maturity to decide for themselves what they need to know. We would hate to have doors shut to

them in later life because they had not learnt the correct skills.

I use the BBC material, which is excellent. Every summer I look through their catalogues and decide what projects we are going to do using their programs and order some teachers notes. Programs like Landmarks and ZigZag are excellent for history and geography projects. The teachers notes enable one to get the full depth in the subject appropriate for the age of the children. As I have become an experienced EOer this has become much easier, but as I enter secondary school teaching I will again read carefully to check we have the full depth and understanding of the subject. Never have I stuck rigidly to my plan, made at the start of the academic year. I have an aim of what we want to study and learn but it is never planned from week to week. For example Charlotte wanted to make a board game, based on the civil war, so the project took longer than planned but she gained some valuable English skills through writing rules for the game. An Aunt visited us from Bangladesh so we slotted in a project on that Country. Like most EOers we make many visits to support our work for example, a Tudor day at a local National Trust property was great when we were studying the Tudors and Stuarts. Living here we are experts on rivers; we have seen mouths, estuaries, water sources, noticed erosion, flooding, deposits etc. For maths we use a variety of methods. Simply teaching the subject using real materials for example exploring the garden for obtuse and acute angles. A gym competition in the garden made a great way to teach decimals. Then they use maths books bought in Smiths and other book shops, often these books need supplementing, to make sure they have grasped the concept, but they are

good to check that I have not forgotten a topic. Their Daddy has developed a software program that gives them plenty of practise in mathematical concepts.

English is again very varied and flexible. Sometime the children say they have an idea for a story, often arising out of a project or experience, sometimes it is an 'essay' based on another subject. We have found very useful tapes and notes from a BBC radio programme called "Listen and Write." Each programme inspires us with lots of ideas. Their series on poetry led Alistair and Charlotte to make a book of their poems which made lovely Christmas presents. Another programme on Hiawatha inspired a project on North American Indians that then led to a look at Pocahontas.

That first term we used a BBC programme called "LRTV", one of a series from "Look and Read" that is being shown again in summer 99. It proved a really fun way to introduce spelling, punctuation, grammar and writing skills. This was the base for all our later English work. It also inspired Alistair and Charlotte to make a couple of video programs of their own (another good Christmas present). So you see one idea has always led to another. The children learn structurally but often using their own ideas. For reading books, after working through the "Oxford Reading Tree" scheme, the children have chosen their own books from the local library. We had fun reading the "Usborne" Puzzle books together. On the children's request we have worked our way through most of them. For reluctant, hesitant readers they are great because there are never great chunks of words to read in one go. The puzzles at the end of each page

provide a break and also a means of telling more of the story.

To begin with we used the BBC material for Science but as we got more confident we used other materials. The Dorling Kindersley books are an excellent resource. They have books for all stages for example 'My First Green Book' inspired us to have rotting food at different stages all around the house. Now we have progressed to the eyewitness guides, which have ideas of how to develop topics - through experiments and explanations. After a day on the beach we did some experiments on how beaches are eroded and making waves using DK's "How the Earth Works".

Alistair and Charlotte are lucky, they have a Daddy who understands computers so we have made considerable use of the computer. We have mainly used creative programs such as Microsoft's "Creative Writer". Software programs on an individual subject are still expensive for home use. In their writing I still encourage them to do every other project by hand because unless it changes in the next few years they will still have to write their GCSEs by hand. Lately we have acquired Internet access. After a recent visit to Stonehenge we were able to download some useful information. Other visits on the net have not been so successful. To date the net has been most useful for e-mail and setting up a web home-page - this has provided an excellent place for the children to exhibit their work (we are lucky in that our local library has also displayed their work). Charlotte loves using e-mail. She is writing without even realising it. Last term a small group of EOs had a French class together. We arranged for the teacher, who teaches the French club in local schools, to teach us in our

house. We are hoping to continue next term. Charlotte has had art lessons with another EO mother who is an artist, in exchange for me teaching her daughter English.

We have discovered that Eoing is hard work. But it is very possible to give the children an excellent child centred education. Everything can be covered one way or another: sports through activity clubs, where your child can achieve far more than is ever possible at school, music through music clubs and specialist instrument lessons, drama through clubs and local groups. Best of all you can learn with them there is enough material to enable you to do it.

BBC Education Information:  
0181 746 11 11

**Sheena Felton, Web Address:**  
**<http://www.felton.clara.net>**

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## **Special Needs**

The December issue's *Special Supplement* is about 'Special Needs'. Your articles are needed now - BUT - don't send them to me or the newsletter editor, as this could hold them up and you could then miss the deadline. Which is 1st November. Send all contributions to the Acting Special Needs Co-ordinator:

**Lesley Belgium,**  
**52 Camberley Road, Knowle,**  
**Bristol, BS4 1SZ.**  
**Tel: 0117 9530624**

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## **A More Structured Approach.**

We have never thought of our education programme as being particularly structured as we often change plans to fit in with the weather. We do however expect the girls to do Maths and English every day, it may only be half an hour when we are on holiday. We (the parents) study the programmes coming up on the schools programmes on BBC2 and Channel 4, we then decide what they will watch and study over the next few months. We have been studying Irish history in the light of the current and past troubles, this led us on to the geography of Ireland which we then visited. The Channel 4 programmes *Understanding Northern Ireland* and *Ulster Unearthed* (to be repeated Spring 1999) have really been an eye-opener and led to much discussion. The girls enjoy the *Europress Physics* on CD-ROM, we have to make them give it a rest after 45 minutes. They also use Maths and English in the same series. We use textbooks for GCSE for Maths and Physics. The girls English is not up to standard due to their Dyslexia so since February we have brought in a tutor once a week who leaves them work to do each day. We hope a new approach and input from outside will improve the amount of work they get done.

The girls are old enough to understand that if you can read, write, add, subtract, divide and multiply they can do anything. Science tends to be Biology, living on a farm we use a practical approach, the girls kept spreadsheets on which Ram mated which Ewes, they helped with lambing and proved themselves capable of dealing with quite difficult deliveries. They used their Maths to work out the size of ponds we would need to dig to provide so many cubic metres of water. They then watched and made notes of all the different sorts of pond life which appeared as if by magic including wild ducks which successfully raised four young to the surprise of all of us.

We try but do not always succeed to do academic or 'school like subjects' in the morning. The afternoons and evenings they do embroidery, knitting, art (mainly watercolours at the moment) and other crafts which they enter in the different agricultural shows we attend. They are a bit naughty because they love coming away with most of the prizes and where it asks which school they attend seeing 'Home Educated' which they have written in large letters. Still I suppose it is child-like to want to prove they can do as well if not better than children who go to school.

The girls have four brothers who have had a varied education. Three are dyslexic and one is left handed. They have all taken GCSE O'Levels none got less than five at levels A-C and one got ten straight A's, all took A'Levels, three have finished at University (two could not read at thirteen), one has done three years voluntary work before now starting on a six year study for the priesthood. He could not have done it without input from school and home education. One even went to boarding school for three years, we managed to get the local authority to pay for him to go to a private boarding school for dyslexic boys of average and above average IQ (it took a long two year fight but it was the right education for him). All children are individuals but we as parents felt that we had the responsibility to decide what was the right education for each of them and see that they got it.

When a child is born we start in those very first moments to educate them. Hopefully they are born into a family, they are taught to feed by day and sleep by night ( if we are lucky) it does not always happen but we persevere. The child has to learn what is acceptable to the family they live within. We have very few rules in the house but those we do have, have to be obeyed. The main thing I have against schools in general is the lack of discipline.

As a family we are very untidy so we often have to hunt for lost books before we can start the day which wastes a lot of time but we usually manage to achieve something each day, even if it's not what we set out to do. We are seen by the inspector twice a year, I don't know why I always panic before a visit but I always do. I make sure I write a report of what we have done including sports activities, I surprise myself as it always looks a lot on paper even when I feel we have done very little. I never say what we will be studying only what we MIGHT study, this means we can change direction whenever we like. We have never had any problems, sometimes he may make a suggestion, I simply say I'll think about it, some of his ideas are good and we decided to study physics at his suggestion and the girls really enjoy it. Other ideas we have ignored and he respects our decision. We live in Calderdale where school education is terrible, I have taken the LEA to the Ministry of State for Education and a local school to court and won compensation for the girls. In four years of home educating the LEA have been more than reasonable, although I would prefer one visit a year instead of two, but I also believe we must protect those children who are at home but not receiving an education.

**Barbara Colpman, Higher Mount Farm, Shore Road, Todmorden, OL14 8SD**

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STOP PRESS            STOP PRESS            STOP PRESS

A Surrey and Hants newspaper has published a VERY negative article about Home Education and EO. The closing sentence states " 'Education Otherwise' should be banned." Please can all interested members, particularly those living in the Surrey and Hants area, write /complain to the newspaper. 'Education Otherwise'

A copy of the article may be obtained from David Young, 91 Lyndhurst Drive,

### **What is a 'structured' approach**

Surely this has no one answer, and quite rightly so. My own 'structure' over the past six years has been to set the timer for any suitable T.V. programme series (schools broadcasts or others) and then fit in around these. This is not a 9 to 3 day, because many interesting programmes, perhaps a series on archaeology, will be in the evenings or on a Sunday. As you begin to see, this is a flexible structure! English and Maths in some form probably have a daily place BUT this could mean not being able to wait to read library books, and carefully laying out a paper pattern - on a specific width - to make the most economical use of material. Of course there are some memory skills needed: for grammar and times tables for example, and these do require a somewhat more formal approach. (Fibonacci numbers nullifiers are great fun!) Cooking is a dual purpose skill (basic chemistry, and basic survival and some discipline with the older child who may try to get out of the washing up (little ones usually enjoy messing about in water). Did I mention that we talk all the time - very valuable

Natural and local history surround us, as does the weather, and knowledge is acquired painlessly and happily here. Natural and man-made heat and cold, light and dark all come into everyday conversation and, thus learning.

R.E. is covered in Schools Broadcasts at all levels. I will not expand on this as every family has beliefs which they pass on (mainly by example may I add) and this is rather too personal a subject about which to generalise. My preference is for the open approach - "Well, I believe ..." but what do you think?" and "Others have different ideas which we must respect" but this is purely personal I hasten to state. Encouraging and enjoying are the main ingredients of any learning, structured or otherwise, and the older child does have somewhat different needs to those outlined above. Now my grandson is 13, he has assumed more responsibility for structuring (or not) his education. He may spend an entire day, or 2, or 3, on one project, say a scenic design model into which he throws enormous concentration, mental and physical energy. This does cover maths, technology, motor skills, patience - not his strongest skill! - artistic ability, and layout, and becomes an absorbing self-set task with an end product, and NOT 'oh, no - not maths/craft/technology AGAIN' - all in their little separate boxes instead of one co-ordinated whole. Either agree with me - or radically dissent - either way you're thinking, evaluating, learning ... that MUST be good for everyone.

**Margaret Parsons. 242 Spring Road, Ipswich.**

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### **Why we have chosen structure and routine.**

As a family we have chosen to use some structure and routine for our children's education. We do not follow any particular curriculum, and our routine is not cast in stone. My husband works outside the home and the children and I usually start our day with physical exercises or a

jog. We have a number of resources, in a variety of subjects which the three children use. Sometimes they work on their own, and sometimes I work with them. It took a lot of trial and error before we arrived at our current choice. I would like to give you some reasons why we have chosen not to go the autonomous route. We find that we often 'feel like' doing the very opposite of what our real goals and desires would have us do.

Allow me to explain. A child might have a real desire to be, say, a musician or a brain surgeon. Yet on a day-to-day basis he might be drawn towards TV soaps, or reading junk fiction, or playing basketball in the garden with his brother. None of these activities are harmful, but the days can go past and the child finds himself doing what gives immediate gratification rather than what would give long-term enjoyment and fulfilment.

As an analogy, take a person who wants to lose weight and gain fitness. He bemoans his current state and makes constant plans to do something about it. But every day he fails to move in the desired direction. Now if he could, he might hire a personal trainer who would force him to get out and exercise daily, and eat correctly. The trainer would require him to do much more than he "feels" like doing. After some time, he finds himself both slim and fit, which was exactly what he ultimately wanted. He would feel better about himself and be extremely proud of having achieved his goal, a goal he, himself set. In the process he also learned a great deal about nutrition and fitness. Now apply the analogy to children and their education. I am, in effect, my child's very own personal trainer. Certainly, left to themselves, young children will ask questions and explore the world around them, (which is why the autonomous approach works so well with the younger set) but as they grow up and the questions become harder, the research more difficult, the mastery of music or understanding of science more complex - then all but the most highly motivated children are likely to take the path of least resistance and abandon their hopes and dreams.

Unless, that is, parents work alongside the child to gently push, or inspire; to find a teacher where the parent is not qualified; to remind the child that it can be a long, hard road to a fulfilling career. Even when children do not have a major ambition, I believe it is important for parents, with maturity and experience, to give their children as many opportunities as possible. Sometimes a child may not feel like learning, but she obeys her parents, or follows the routine they have developed together. In the process she learns that there are things in life we don't like doing, but that benefit us in the long run. She learns a valuable lesson in diligence, accountability and endurance. Later, as she gains understanding, she should be allowed to make her own goals for education. She does this, but still has her parents, or teachers, to help her achieve those goals. In the end she is grateful to those who helped her, even though, during the process there may be issues she comes to disagree with. But without someone outside the child's own day-to-day desires, it is easy to lose the wider picture of hopes and ambitions.

Contrast a child with libertarian parents who choose fully autonomous home education. He may be a motivated child who chooses to take responsibility for his growth and learning. There are times when he is in the middle of a project, but drops it because he no longer feels like doing it. If his parents are totally non-coercive they will make no comment. The child may find a half-complete project, months later, covered in dust. All he learns as a result is that nothing much is important.

Nevertheless, despite our chosen approach, I don't think there are any absolutes when it comes to parenting, or even education. What suits one child / parent combination may not suit another. Add another sibling or two and the complications increase. In the end each truly loving parent does what they think is best, based on their own internalised values and traditions as well as the individual needs of their children.

Parental choices may be influenced by hurts, and problems they experienced as a child. The truth is, though, that the parenting and educating style is chosen by the parents NOT by the child. The parents have the right to choose structure or autonomy, or any mixture of the two. There are not simply two possible approaches to raising and educating a child, but an infinity of possibilities.

Home education allows us to explore those possibilities, learn together, enjoy each other, and ultimately walk hand in hand with our children until they are ready to walk on their own.

**GAYLE JOUBERT** (Whitchurch Hill, Oxon)

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### A More Structured Approach

There are so many approaches to home education as there are home educators and not all of them are right for everybody. It is important to find the one that is right for you.

Having undertaken the momentous decision to educate my twelve year old son at home it quickly became apparent that an autonomous approach was not for us. Having both had many years of 'school culture' thrust upon us we needed the security that comes with a more structured approach to learning and some sort of timetable - however flexible.

Damien is very mature for his age and readily participates in the selection of text/work books which are both appropriate and interesting to work through together. Our 'terms' are more evenly spread throughout the year than the statutory forty weeks of school terms. Our timetable is sufficiently structured to satisfy our need for security but equally it is flexible enough to allow for surprise visitors or days out.

To those dedicated to an autonomous approach our lifestyle may seem like a dilute form of school and that may be true but it works for us and I would certainly recommend it to others.

**Pam and Damien Simone, 71 Wheatlands, Stevenage, Herts. SG2 0JU**

# EDUCATING ARCHIE

by SEG

That autumn LEA visit!

When was it we did those sums Archie?

don't worry Mum

me, Worry??

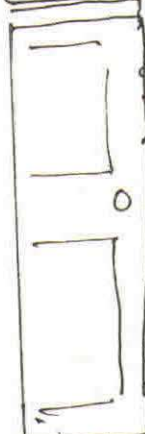


Yeah, you, Mum. Just say I'M SELF REGULATED

yes! might, actually

and so Mrs G. psyches herself up for the confrontation. Then - RING - RING -

she whips open the door...



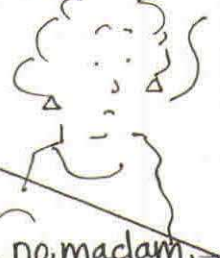
Archie is SELF-REGULATED and CHILD-CENTRED.

HE LEARNS NATURALLY.

WE DON'T ALL HAVE TO FOLLOW A CURRICULUM FOR PITY'S SAKE! AND WE DID SUMS YESTERDAY, ANYWAY.

I quite agree

You do?? And you're an INSPECTOR?



no, ma'am, I'm a postman. Sign here please. (That is, if you CAN sign...)



SEE AD FOR ARCHIE XMAS CARDS 1998

**Struc-tured:** To provide with or form into a well-defined structure. [Middle English, from Old French, from Latin *structura*, from *struere* (past participle *structus*)to construct.] Reader's Digest Universal Dictionary

### **John Holt - *Freedom and Beyond***

"Almost everyone who talks or writes about learning situations that are open, free, noncoercive, learner-directed, calls these situations "unstructured," and their traditional authoritarian, coercive, teacher-directed opposites "structured." People who support open learning use these words in this way as much as people who oppose it. It is a serious error. There are no such things as "unstructured" situations. They are not possible. Every human situation, however casual and unforced ... has a structure.

If two men meet by chance on the street and for half a minute talk to each other, that meeting has a structure, perhaps even a very complicated one. Who are the two men? What is their relationship to each other? Are they more or less equals, or does one have some kind of power over the other? Is the encounter equally welcome to both of them? If not, why? ... We could ask dozens, scores, perhaps even hundreds of such questions. The answers to any one of them will have something to do with the structure of the meeting on the street. And the structure of this meeting exists within many other structures."

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." -William Butler Yeats

### **Homeschooling in France**

The following article is reprinted in abridged form, with the kind permission of Growing Without Schooling (*Growing Without Schooling*, 2269 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02140. Tel: (617) 864-3100. Subscription \$25/year) (submitted by P. Fielding-Bell, Lancashire)

Sophie Haesen writes from Vieux Ferrette, France:

[...] The legal situation is pretty clear; as the law states that education, not schooling, is compulsory from age 6 on, by the parents or any other person the parents designate. You have to inform the mayor of your town and the regional Board of Education about your decision to homeschool your child at least two weeks before school starts again after the summer holidays, or at any time during school terms if you want to take your child out of school during the year. Controls are requested by the law at ages 8, 10 and 12, mainly to check the knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic and to decide what to do if this knowledge is not judged sufficient.

Though the law states these conditions quite clearly, the regional or local authorities do not always know about them. Sometimes families are asked to prove their qualifications, to hand in a detailed curriculum, to have their child tested every year, etc. Sometimes a social worker comes around unannounced to have a closer look at the family's living conditions. The parents do not always insist on their rights, partly because they simply do not know them, partly because they depend on some public money and are afraid to make too many waves. It seems that it's mostly families with rather alternative lifestyles who are bothered, maybe because the authorities do not always consider a rather marginal lifestyle and keeping the child away from

school (since school is supposed to integrate marginals) to be good for a child.

[...] The new French government has put changes in the educational system on their list of priorities, but so far homeschooling has not been mentioned. It is obvious that the school system here, which is based on concurrence and a multitude of subjects which are all considered important, creates too many losers, and the expression "l'echec scolaire" (school failure) can be heard everywhere. The solutions proposed by the Minister of Education include making reading obligatory in kindergarten, introducing a new subject, "citizenship", as early as possible, and generally underlining school's responsibility to educate children.

Probably more than 99% of all French children go to school (and between 90% and 95% attend kindergarten from age 3 on), and most people find it strange to hear that a family chooses the homeschooling option when there's such a perfect way to delegate responsibility to school. Our oldest son is now 6 and we have been feeling social pressure to enroll him in school since he was 3. When discussing this subject with others, we did not argue but just explained again and again our point of view. Meanwhile, our decision is at least tolerated in our village, and nobody asks anymore what we will decide for our three younger kids, as this is pretty obvious. That's fine with us, as we feel well integrated anyway and don't think we should try to convince others of our choice. If our example is getting others interested in homeschooling, so much the better.

Apart from the different associations' newsletters, there is no nation-wide French publication for families' needs yet. As I feel that there's a need for an independent, practical magazine, I am right now busy getting the first issues of a bimonthly or quarterly newsletter on its way. So, if you live in France or know homeschoolers there, spread the word.

Three French homeschooling organisations:

'Homeschooling Bulletin', c/o Sophie Haesen, 7 rue de la Montagne, F-68480 Vieux Ferrette.

'L'École a la Maison', c/o Nadine Stewart, 6 Brande Rue, F-38660 Le Touvet.

'Les Enfants D'Abor', Shosha, 4 rue do Lergue, F-34500 Brignac.

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## MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Just a note to say that you need to look out for your new Membership cards in the December newsletter. All members will now get their card this way. If you need more than one card or if you lose our card please send a stamped addressed envelope to:

Janet Wilkinson, 58 Brindley Close, Wembley, London, HA0 1BS

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Beverly Young [beverley.young@btinternet.com](mailto:beverley.young@btinternet.com) wrote that this was sent to her and she thought that EOers would find it interesting.

"I saw in the computing trade papers that Oxford University will be offering various degrees 'on-line via the internet' within the next five years."

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Anyone who has got a book collection/library and a garden wants for nothing. Cicero:

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## Book Reviews

### **Homeschooling: A Patchwork of Days**

edited by Nancy Lande, WindyCreek Press, 1996 ISBN 0-9651303

Ever wondered what happens in other people's houses? Learn how thirty families from around the world handle the learning of several children, how they get the house (moderately) cleaned, meals cooked and have time for husband and wife to be together. How do they resolve differences as well as nurture the character and education of their children? Each day is a "close up and personal view". There are photos, log pages, listing of resources etc. I liked this enough to recommend it to several people and have donated a copy to the library as well as lent it out my copy to several other homeschooling families and other people curious as to "how can you homeschool?". It celebrates how many different ways there are to Educate Otherwise!

Wendrie Heywood 18 Bedford Road, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5LS

Tel/Fax: 01206 752817 email : wendrie@zevmac.demon.co.uk

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### **The Homeschooling Book of Answers: The Eighty Eight Most Important**

Questions Answered by Homeschooling's Most Respected Voices

By Linda Dobson Prima Publishing 1998

Two or three years ago I spent some time staffing the EO enquiry line and, as a result, thought that I'd heard every question regarding Home Ed that could be asked. I was equally convinced that I'd managed to obtain every possible reply. Most of my snippets of advice came from my own home educating experiences and those of my EO friends. Linda Dobson's book gave me quite a few extra morsels for thought.

Although primarily aimed at the American market, this book is almost equally relevant to the British home education community. It draws upon the points of view of around fifty of home education's "most respected (US) voices" and in doing so, presents a staggering diversity of perspectives.

Questions such as "How do I develop a curriculum or plan of study?" "Do I have to give my kids tests?" "How will my children develop their own view of the world if I'm teacher as well as parent?" as well as others based on the cost of home education and (the inevitable) socialisation are covered.

Each question has several replies to it, which ensures that a wide range of viewpoints are covered. Many of the answers provided practical examples of how writers tackled certain occurrences rather than stating that they knew the correct way to handle things i.e. "This is how we/others did such a thing.." rather than "This is how you should do things." The wide range of voices ensures that one particular expert's opinion does not dominate the entire book.

The legal situation in America is similar to our own in some states but differs hugely in others so any sections referring to the law are best read for interest only rather than as advice to be taken wholesale.

On the whole I thoroughly enjoyed this book and would recommend it. It would have been nice if there was a British version which addressed our experiences more specifically. If it was of a standard equal to the one already produced, I'd be first in the queue at the bookshop.

Available from: H.E.R.O. Books (see advert on advert page). The price from H.E.R.O. Books is £9.99 (the list price is £11.99 there is 20% off full retail price) plus £2.50 p&p (heavy book!!).

Beverley Young

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**Natural Childhood**

Edited by: John Thomson

The Publisher: Gaia Books Ltd. ISBN 1-85675-022-1, price quoted £14.99

Each author has written a section of the book with Roland Meighan writing the "Education and Schooling" section. The book is supportive of natural parenting and protecting creativity, the unfolding world, health and healing, education and schooling. Each section is written by an expert in the field including Tim Kahn, Mildred Masheder, Lynne Oldfield, Michaela Glockler and Roland Meighan.

Roland Meighan presents autonomous education as positive and active: "Self-discipline, and learning the skills of how to learn and research for information are the essence of the autonomous approach", he says. He also points out that what he calls democratic education can be even more flexible and beneficial to a child's development. Autonomous education is not defined as adult non-interference with children. My favorite bit is an adaptation of DL Nolte's poem "Children learn what they live"

"If children live with encouragement they learn to be confident...

    If children live with tolerance they learn to be patient...

    If children live with praise they learn to be appreciative...

    If children live with acceptance they learn to love...

    If children live with approval they learn to like themselves..."

I was concerned and disappointed by the overall impression given of autonomous education in the August newsletter, despite some interesting articles from individual contributors. I felt this book gave a better viewpoint.

Christine Adey 1 Dunbury Cottages, Milton Abbas, Dorset, DT11 0DH

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**EDUCATION, n. [L. educatio.]**

The bringing up, as of a child, instruction; formation of manners. Education comprehends all that series of instruction and discipline which is intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, and form the manners and habits of youth, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations. To give children a good education in manners, arts and science, is important; to give them a religious education is indispensable; and an immense responsibility rests on parents and guardians who neglect these duties. Webster's 1828 dictionary

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It is in vain to hope to please all alike. Let a man stand with his face in what direction he will, he must necessarily turn his back on one half of the world. - George Dennison Prentice

## **Making a case for talk'**

CLARKSON, G.F., 1990 MPhil., Bristol

Several people have asked me about research that supports talk as a learning tool and with this in mind, I have taken the following extracts from the above Ph.D. thesis. (Submitted by P. Fielding-Bell)

The hypotheses presented by Clarkson state that:

- ◆ Talk is as effective a medium for thinking as is writing.
- ◆ That children regardless of their success or failure in school-based tests and assessments, are capable of using talk to make sense of their world and to come to the understanding of new ideas and concepts.

He quotes a DES report:

"To clarify one's own feelings and thought, the kind of fumbling, tentative groping of meaning, is of uppermost importance in [...] learning, as it is throughout life. Pedagogically, it is important for the teacher to be able to distinguish and accept such language as a stage on the path to clearer expression" (DES Report (p33 par. 3) of the Kingman committee of enquiry into the teaching of the English language. HMSO 1988)

As a result of studying children, Clarkson reports that:

- ◆ Being given responsibility for learning encourages learning.
- ◆ New knowledge has to be connected with what is known before learning can occur, a process most easily effected by talk.
- ◆ Talk stimulates the creation of new thoughts as well as the recall of existing knowledge.
- ◆ Having an audience puts a press on our language as we seek to clarify our thoughts for our listeners.
- ◆ An interested audience gives a real purpose for the talk and encourages further reflection about both content and language.
- ◆ The collaborative nature of talk gives speakers confidence and helps stimulate thought.
- ◆ Thinking through the spoken word is more effective and quicker than writing the same thoughts and the difficulty of producing written code may interfere with the thinking process.
- ◆ The demands of correct orthography comes between thought and its expression.
- ◆ Hearing our thoughts spoken aloud forces us to redraft them.
- ◆ Hearing the rhythm of words spoken aloud helps our understanding of them.
- ◆ Reaching new understandings and expressing them, through talk, has its own rigorous demands.
- ◆ For many children, what is spoken carries weight and is more immediate and important than what is written.

Clarkson concludes:

"If those who are responsible for education in the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education and Science do not recognise the power of talk to develop cognitive ability, because of narrow perceptions of the nature of talk or of the abilities of pupils; if they remain deaf to what talk can do for children and what they can do with it, they deny those for whom they are primarily responsible, the most powerful and the primary means of learning available to all human beings. I can only assume that the traditional view of teacher as transmitter, together with expectation based on school experiences of decades past, are more powerful determinants of what they believe should happen in the classroom than inner experience or pedagogic understanding. It would seem that we cannot look to the national curriculum orders alone to alter classroom methodology. It is not until it is recognised that learning is an active, essentially individual process, and that the most ready at hand tool for learning is the spoken word, that all children for all ages and all levels of ability will be given the opportunities they deserve in the classroom to make their own sense of the world in which they live."

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### **Britain on the Couch – A chance to appear on Television?**

Diverse Productions are putting together a two part documentary series for Channel Four on the cause and treatment of anxiety and depression. The programmes will be presented by clinical psychologist Oliver James and based on his book "Britain on the Couch".

As part of this we are very keen to interview young children (and their parents) who are suffering from/have suffered from the pressures of education. In particular, we are interested in the damage that can be done by excessive expectations – and how academic stress can result in feelings of self-doubt and low social self-esteem. Whilst we realise that specific traumas – such as prolonged bullying – are highly relevant to this area, it is *the pressure of having to achieve* in which we are most interested.

Those parents who have removed – (or are in the process of removing) their children from school may well provide a valuable insight into and/or experience of these issues. More sympathetic than politicised, Britain on the Couch aims to explore a general malaise rather than point the finger at individuals or institutions. The damage done to our mental health by an increasingly pressured social environment will form the back-bone of our argument, but it the voices of people who are suffering or have suffered which will be our focus.

If any children or parents would like to get in touch, they can contact me at anytime on 0171 915 5467 or else 0370 331 667. Thank you for your trouble.  
Rob McCabe – Researcher Britain on the Couch.'

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### **EO Pamphlet: Information For LEAs**

A 1st draft of the "Information for LEAs" pamphlet as mentioned in the last newsletter was discussed at the EO council meeting at Featherstone 5<sup>th</sup> September. A 2<sup>nd</sup> draft is available to EO members. Your comments would be appreciated by mid November. If you want an electronic copy (Word format) contact Jill Fisher. E-mail : [ijgis@mcn.com](mailto:ijgis@mcn.com). If you want a paper copy please send an A5 SAE plus 2x26p stamps to: Christine Adey, 1 Dunbury Cottages, Milton Abbas, Dorset, DT11 0DH

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## Unknowing Tyrant

Late Sunday night, in one sitting, I devoured the August EO Newsletter – cover to cover – hating and punishing myself continuously throughout, aghast that I could have been such a tyrant all these years without knowing it.

At breakfast, I put the Autonomous Education thing to my children:- Charlotte, 12; Edward 10; and William 3 – but he doesn't really have an opinion (or does he? There I go again, making judgements) "uhh.... Yeah..." they said, nodding sagely over their boiled eggs. "Sounds like a good idea!"

"But what will you do all day?" I said, trying to suppress the panic in my voice.

"Well, er, I'd play the piano and the guitar" said Edward; "I'd read and write my book" said Charlotte.; William said that he would read and play the piano and the guitar and write a book.

"But what about other things – like Maths, Science, History and Geography and stuff?"

"Oh, we'd do them as well" said Charlotte as if I had been stupid to mention it.

"When we felt like it" said Edward.

"Ahh..... mmm"

And there you leave us, thoughtful for a moment, children entertaining hopeful smiles; me, trying to look as if I know what to do next. Ah! Saved! ..... a toot on a horn announces the arrival of the fish man – "Haddock for tea?" I scuttle off. "D'ya let your kids have a summer holiday then?" the fish man joked knowing what crazy EO people we are. "Oh, life's one long holiday for them," I replied, filling up with guilt at the thought of our didactic regime.

At this point perhaps I should explain that we are not what you might call the typical EO family. I have looked with longing and admiration at those serene and happy, untidy and chaotic households and come away determined to do better, but it never lasts. Before I know where I am, I'm tidying up, reorganising the library and typing out a new timetable. I am beyond hope. I blame it entirely on my parents and my education.

But – I have, this week, managed to take some action: in view of the slightly improved summer weather I have plonked an old safari bed, with a pile of rugs and cushions, in a quiet corner of the garden, intending to lie comfortably in the sun with several books I have been meaning to read for some time, and to ignore, as far as possible, the agenda which the children have set out for themselves. I have been unrelentingly tough. It is now Thursday and I have hardly stirred from my bed in the garden, except to occupy my bed in the house, or the kitchen table for sustenance.

I have turned a serene gaze towards my youngest who has eaten nothing but jam and chocolate all week, and smiled indulgently as the older two shunned the cheese and tuna salad with wholewheat rolls in favor of Warburton's white Sliced and a jar of peanut butter.

I am unmoved as the electric guitars wail day after day, to the accompaniment of William screaming ".... But I want to be the keyboardist!". And I have nonchalantly turned another page of my book as the mountains of dead insects, feathers and archaeological finds gather, and was only momentarily diverted this afternoon when a toad was presented for inspection at the

kitchen window. I have refused to notice as their hair got dirtier, their clothes smellier and their bedrooms increasingly eclectic. I am sure that this new found freedom is doing us all good: I'm certainly feeling the benefit; I've been saying for years that I am the only one who does any work around here anyway.

The children do seem a little wary though, a little suspicious of the new project – the new laid-back, free-thinking Mum.... But don't worry kids - Ha! Ha! – September's just around the corner – we'll soon have you back to work!

Jane Winlow

Seaton Old Hall Farm, Seaton Ross, York YO42 4NB Tel: 01759 318469

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#### **EO Members email List**

There is now an e-mail list for EO members. It's main purpose is to have a means of electronic communication whereby EO members can share information that affects or would be of interest specifically to EO members. A secondary purpose is to have a medium when a quick "Call to arms" might be necessary – for example, in giving responses to a consultation document or to misinformation in the press or on television.

If you are an EO member and would like to be on the list, please e-mail Malcolm Muckle. For reasons of privacy, your e-mail address will not be communicated to others members on the list; the volume of traffic is low, maybe once or twice per month. Malcolm Muckle

14 Springfield Ave, London N10 3SU 0181 442 1643 [Fireflies@easynet.co.uk](mailto:Fireflies@easynet.co.uk)

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#### **CHANGE OF ADDRESS - SINGLE PARENT CONTACT**

Sarah Martin has moved to: "Lammas", 34 Cowslip Drive, Little Thetford, Ealing, Cambs, CB6 3 JD Tel: 01353 648 716

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#### **Desperately Seeking Sisterhood**

Unfortunately our ad in the last EO Newsletter (no. 123) shows a typing error which could be mis-leading to readers.

Instead of "female, loving..." it is supposed to read "female-loving..." We are not excluding males from our (hopeful) future commune! As long as they (and the females) are: soul loving, child loving, non sexist, kind, gentle, spiritually evolving (working through emotional blocks in order to become better people /parents), self disciplined and responsible, non power hungry or ego centred, low tech living, humble planet loving, compassionate, open minded, flexible, playful, intuitive, wise etc. etc. If you feel inspired to write to us, we'd love to hear from you.

Karen Mann, Rachel Mann (12), Paul Walsh  
2 School Court, Dovercourt, Harwich Essex, CO12 3AS

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What is laid down, ordered, factual is never enough to embrace the whole truth: life always spills over the rim of every cup. -Boris Pasternak

## EO Family Diary – Bunn Family

After last month's newsletter the compulsive worrier that I am sat the whole family down for a serious talk about where our home-schooling is going. We discussed methods, content, time-tabling etc. And discovered that we are doing more or less what makes us happy anyway.

Emily is determined to do well academically and I fully support her choice. She has three phases to her learning – Phase (1) lasts about a month and consists of concentrated work from books, t.v., magazines – anything she can get hold of (mostly Maths and Languages at the moment).

Phase (2) Again about a month long, is taken by reading every book that comes within reach (the horror fascination is over thankfully), this month's list included horror – Terry Pratchett – Science Fantasy – anything about the Authurian legend – Sherlock Holmes.

Phase (3) is her "slobbering" month when she basically slobbs around the house.

Jessica too has phases although not as predictable as Emily's. For a couple of days at a time she will throw herself into her projects then she'll go off to play games with Meg or draw or write on the keyboard. She doesn't like too much structure but she does like to be given ideas for her projects and when she is in an academic mood she asks me to set some Maths or English.

Megan, on the other hand, prefers to toddle along at her own pace. She sometimes asks me to set work for her but because she is so stubborn she will take forever to do it!

She does however love doing worksheets. I find a lot of them patronizing and perhaps a little too easy but she really does love doing them. I think it's because everything is explained so well on them, she is given a task, told how to do it and what to look for – Easy? Maybe, but they are helping to rebuild her confidence which had been ripped from her at school.

I don't force work on my girls, they do what they want when they want – I just provide materials, encouragement and guidance. The only time I panic and insist on something being done is the week before the L.E.A. arrive – and I know from your letters that a lot of you recognise this scenario – we all work flat out to ensure that we have something to show because no matter what we have we will still be criticised and "gently" warned about reports and children's panels etc. Just enough to scare us into thinking that if we don't compromise by doing enough work to please "THEM" then we are at great risk of being split up.

This summer we have travelled a fair bit (thanks to a Family Railcard) we've been to Glasgow where we visited the excellent Transport Museum and we saw the Dead Sea Scrolls at Kelvin Hall museum. We also went back to Scunthorpe to see my Mum and used her house as a base to visit the surrounding area. We visited Brigg and Caistor (ancient Market Towns), Lincoln Cathedral (Plus window shopping up Steep Hill) and Halifax where we paid a fortune to go around the most disappointing place we have ever been – EUREKA!

If there is room in one of the newsletters (and of course if anyone is interested) I have written a full report on all of the museums we have visited – the best of which was Kilmartin House. Which we re-visited as a group a

couple of week ago. If ever you come to Scotland, I would recommend a visit to this wonderful small museum. The valley itself is full of history and it is all brought together here. Our guide was Damion who dealt extremely well with the age range (2 yrs to 14 yrs plus five adults including a granny!) and took us on a hike round the stones and cairns bringing the past to life for us.

I know I keep going on about this place but I was so impressed, from the incredible film (made up of 600 slides) to the hands on exhibits – wonderful! We even took part in exhibits – wonderful! We even took part in a "dig" specially laid on for the children.

Anyway, Scruff is growing and keeping us all fit as he needs lots of walks, we even walked him to Ostel Bay which is the nearest sandy beach to us. Here we went exploring caves, rock pool and gorse bushes where the fungi grows – a lot of mushrooms are out early and the puff balls are already on the turn much to Meri's delight as she loves to kick them and watch the spores "puff" out.

The rest of our time is taken up with packing. The council are putting in a new central heating system in all of their houses and so we have to get everything out of the way. To make sure we are out of the way the girls and I are going to Devon for a week, we'll be staying in Westward Ho! (Fab name) and intend to take a trip to the Natural History and Science Museums in London.

Quick up date (1) The recycled musical instrument – most of it was converted (out of necessity) into a fruit cage, ah well.

(2) weaving – I was sent some interesting ideas, I now have a huge loom in the front room and I'm working on a portable one.

(3) Instruments – someone sent some info. About twig whistles which was great as we'd just seen some stone age ones (guess where!) we'd also seen some stone whistles and have been scouring the beach for our own.

(4) Magazines we now buy reforestation Scotland, Permaculture Magazine and the Big Issue (whenever we see a vendor).

Well I think I ought to finish now or I'll take over the whole newsletter. Once again thanks for all of your letters, I promise I will try and write back especially to you Jane (I. of W.) and Racheal (Peterborough)

Sharon Bunn 16 Berryburn, Kames, by Tighnabruach, Argyll, PA21 2BQ

EO™

A bit of good news from EO council meeting at Featherstone 5<sup>th</sup> September: Many thanks to the individuals who have registered our company name as a Trademark. This is good news as it means that LEAs will no longer be able to (lawfully) call the department dealing with home-educators, Education Otherwise. This should clear up most of the misunderstandings which have arisen in the past for prospective HERS.

Long live "Education Otherwise"™!!

Elkind "the Hurried Child" - pp. 65 & 66: "Parents who love learning will create a stimulating environment for children, which is far more beneficial to them than specific instruction. Parents who fill the house with books, paintings and music, who have interesting friends and discussions, who are curious and ask questions provide young children with all the intellectual stimulation they need. In such an environment, formal instruction would be like ordering a hamburger at a four-star restaurant."

## EO Family Diary - The Fortune-Wood Family

The summer (the one you missed if you blinked too many times) is coming to an end. Despite not having much good weather on any of our family holidays this year it was good to spend some time with other home educating families. What was particularly good for us, in retrospect, was the sense of "normality" that we gain every time we're in contact with others who home educate in a similar style and share some of our philosophy of education and life.

"Normal" is a slippery term and one that isn't always easy (or even desirable!) to appropriate for ourselves.

Despite the growing reality of post modernism society around us still seems very keen to decide on what is the "norm" as opposed to what is marginal, alternative, cranky or even off limits. The government is straining after more and more conformity in education (for example the new "literacy hour" with its activities prescribed down to the minute.) Professors of education on Radio 4 still persist in telling the public that home education is for a rarefied group - after all the man said authoritatively, you really need to be a teacher to deliver the whole of the national curriculum at home! People in the street still ask if "its" legal and follow up the questions about keeping terms and hours and tests.

For us, though, one particular pressure to conform, much nearer to home, made us stop to value again the support we get from time spent with families who are in some sense "like us". We do not live in a private home, but a vicarage with a lot of coming and goings. The congregation are warm, tolerant people - they don't expect us to have a particular "image", they don't think that our children should be harassed to tidy their rooms; they don't equate shiny, scrubbed, docile children with "godly" children or a pristine home with moral decency. But, apparently, my lovely congregation are out of step.

We returned from our holiday to a diocesan letter, an ultimatum, either we do a thorough spring clean or repairs (some of them issues of safety) will not be carried out. Phrases like 'standards not being wholly appropriate' sent us into a panic. We ran around cleaning and tidying, but surely none of the hundreds of people who have eaten here have even got ill? Surely there is never a time when a guest can't find a clean cup or plate? Isn't the living room always tidy enough that any seat can be sat on? We tried to get some support from a member of the hierarchy with a 'pastoral' remit, we only got a stream of accusation.

We do live out of step and, because of my work, we do so in a very public arena. Telling the people who wrote the letter that we prize our children's creativity over tidiness would not cut much ice - words like discipline are never far below the surface. (I've already established in this arena that home education is seen as an indulgence, a form of over protectiveness, a regrettable lack of conformity.)

So thank you - to those at the Welsh Camp, to the families from Libertarian Family Network who we visited in Devon, to the Warwickshire EOers who we've had the time to be with over the summer, to Kirsten Freiesleben for her timely piece on "Untidy Houses" in the August Newsletter, thanks to all of you we can go on home educating, being out of step and still resisting some of the labels that go with "abnormal".

Jan Fortune-Wood St Barnabas Vicarage [Jan.MikeFW@btinternet.com](mailto:Jan.MikeFW@btinternet.com)

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## Publicity Update August 1998.

I had an idea to mail shot all the local newspapers in the country (1,150) asking them to include an article about EO in the 'Back to School' section or equivalent supplement. This I have done. I have 'phoned around local co-ordinators to try and find local EO members to talk to the local press. I am getting 5+ phone calls a day from local newspapers and/or people who have seen an article already printed in a local newspaper, and are contacting me for more information.

I have 'phoned many, many families in EO to ask if they will take part in Panorama (EO - this is the big time!), trying to find folk to talk to Tattler magazine (they wanted yuppies - are there any out there in EO-land?), contacting people who would be happy to take part in a two part documentary on 'the pressure to achieve in society' on Channel 4.

Safeways have stated in their free magazine that '..... and you have no alternative but to send your child to school' - I have spoken to the editor asking her to correct the mistake in the next Safeways' publication. Safeways print their in-house magazine months in advance and so we have missed the boat. But on a more positive note, she would like to include an article about home-educating and EO in next years publication. I have just sent her all the EO bumf! I have also sent information to Tesco's' and Sainsbury's' head offices to include an article about EO in their in-house magazines.

As a long term listener of the Archers, I have followed up Beverley Young's suggestion to contact them to see whether there is a possibility of one of the child characters being home-educated. I have spoken to the producer and he has asked me to send him information about EO - this I have done. Dum de Dum de dum de dum, dum de dum .....fingers crossed.

The publicity team are working on at present 4 TV programmes and following up numerous newspaper and magazine enquiries. EO postcards should be available for distribution soon - please see information in the next EO newsletter.

Articles supporting EO have appeared in various journals, newspapers and magazines recently. Two particularly interesting articles were - The Guardian - May 6th - 'Dull lessons blamed for truancy' and The Times Education Supplement - August 28th - 'The strange appeal of staying at home' by Meg Harper, (many thanks for her enriching and entertaining words). - From The Publicity Team. And Belinda Harris, The Old House, Station Rd, Buckfastleigh, Devon TQ11 0BU Tel/Fax 01364 643343

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**Please Note:** Beverley Young is looking to set up a network of publicity contacts who are prepared to collect a "bank" of people who are willing and able to be interviewed by the media.

These publicity contacts need not necessarily be willing to give interviews themselves but should have contact with local groups of EOers. Ideally, there would be at least one contact per county (more in large counties or places that are geographically isolating).

Beverley Young [beverley.young@btinternet.com](mailto:beverley.young@btinternet.com)

## NOTICE:

Circulation of the draft guidance relating to the Crime and Disorder Bill, *Removal of truants to designated premises*, is imminent. Please return your comments in writing as soon as possible. These will be discussed with as many council members as possible, before a reply is written if the DfEE's consultation period prevents this from occurring in the next newsletter. Send an A4/A5 SAE and 2 stamps to Christine Adey, 1 Dunbury Cottages, Milton Abbas, Dorset, DT11 0DH

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Christine Adey (Dorset) writes: The editor of the August newsletter chose to omit the following information. Apologies for the distress and inconvenience that this delay has caused to some members.

## TRUANCY WATCH PATROLS AND NEW POLICE POWERS

The Social Exclusion Unit, created by the government in December 1997, produced a report, *Truancy and School Exclusion*, in May. Its recommendations have led to new powers being given to the police in the Crime and Disorder Bill which was passed in July. The powers are currently called *Removal of truants to designated Premises* and will be operational by the end of this year. The new law will be accompanied by written guidance, produced by the Home Office and DfEE for the police and LEAs, which give further information about how the powers are to be implemented. Section 3 of the clause of the Bill states:

If a constable has reasonable cause to believe that a child or young person found by him in a public place in a specified area during a specified period –

- (a) is of compulsory school age; and
- (b) is absent from school without lawful authority,

the constable may remove the child or young person to designated premises, or to the school from which he is so absent.

The Home Office and the DfEE are fully aware that home-educated children fall outside this definition, along with foreign students, pupils at split-site schools, those attending medical appointments and children from independent schools who have much longer holidays. The law is designed to target specific truants in specific places at specific times. It is intended as an extension of the Truancy Watch scheme which has existed for some time. The intention is that the new law will enable those children who have already been identified by the Truancy Watch scheme to be legally removed from a public place by the police. The powers are intended to be implemented in a properly organised and authorised way.

Our interest lies in the definition of *reasonable cause*, and whether a child's verbal explanation that he is educated otherwise than at school is sufficient or whether written explanation from the parent is carried. The issue of how much information the child should give is also contentious, particularly their name and address, which can then be processed by the LEA as a means of identifying and monitoring families home-educating in the area. None of us wants compulsory ID cards, but it may well be advisable for parents to provide an unaccompanied child or teenager with a written statement or a telephone number, which the constable may use for immediate confirmation. This information may be offered in order to satisfy the constable that he does not

have reasonable cause to believe that a child... is absent from school without lawful authority, but would not necessarily entail identification. The statement could simply say:

My child (*Christian name*) is educated otherwise than at school in accordance with Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act and is out with my knowledge and consent.

*Signature of parent*

Name and telephone number

Some Truancy Watch patrols have begun targeting children who are accompanied by their parents as well as unaccompanied children, and asking for the parent's and child's name and address, which is passed to the LEA. According to a constable involved in a patrol, we are not legally obliged to give our name and address in these circumstances. Certainly the EO members I have spoken to feel that this would be an unwarranted intrusion of our privacy, since there is no grave and immediate reason to fear for the child's safety, particularly if accompanied by a parent.

I have written to the DfEE and Home Office to raise points of interest to us that might be considered in the drafting of written guidance. Although children educated at home fall outside the definition in the law, contacting your local Truancy Watch patrol, by phoning the police and asking for the co-ordinating officer, and raising awareness of home education and the sensitive issue of identification, may help to prevent misunderstandings. You could also ask to be informed of the dates and locations of intended patrols when the police powers will be implemented. (The DfEE currently considers this quite reasonable) Talking to the LEA co-ordinating officer could also be useful.

### **"How to Improve EO"**

There is a document available, collated from responses to the question "How to Improve EO" It is hoped that it will act as a catalyst for fruitful discussion between all EO members. If you would like a copy please send an A5 SAE (26p postage ) to: Malcolm Muckle 14 Springfield Ave, London, N10 3SU

### **Open Letter to Malcolm Muckle**

I have received your discussion document Improving EO. As a long-standing member and having been local co-ordinator for about ten years, I feel well qualified to give a response.

I think you raise some important issues and make some useful suggestions for discussion. However, apart from being repetitive and over-long, your document got my back up for various reasons:

It seems to try to give the impression of being a report from a working party but without giving any indication of the constitution, brief or objective.

However, having read it through I suspect it is just from you - if I am right, why not say so?

It is full of personal opinions, unsupported by any evidence, masquerading as facts. For example:

"The aims of EO need to be re-stated [...]...the image held of EO in the general public's eye is one of almost establishment. [...] the number of people leaving indicates a disappointment in the product itself [...]"

I find myself in disagreement with these 3 statements (which are only a small sample from one section of the document). However, I would not presume to give my own views as representative of EO as a whole - why do you try to?

The general tone is not democratic, for example:

"The Council [...] having reached a consensus, the general membership needs to be informed (via the newsletter). Council members must find ways of leading from the front, rather than trailing in the wake of events."

Personally, I think the general membership needs to be consulted, and that response to members, government or whatever is a vitally important function - not to be denigrated as you imply. I also resent the disempowerment implied by your vision of top-down management. True democracy may take longer to get results, but in my view they'll be all the more effective and acceptable for it.

Time and space do not permit a fuller discussion here; but I hope that any attempt at Improving EO will be with the full involvement of everyone at the grass roots and not, as is the impression given by this paper, steamrollered through to suit anyone's individual agenda.

Anne Rix, Silver Birch, Firgrove Road, Cross-in-Hand, Heathfield, E.Sx., TN21 0QL East Sussex Co-ordinator. Tel. 01435 86 27 94

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**Response to Anne Rix:**

Through personal contacts over the last few years, and through the postings on the UK-Home-Education email support list over the last year or so, it became apparent that although various EO members had suggestions, positive contributions - and 'complaints' - that could be of benefit to EO generally, these were frequently not being voiced - or if voiced, were not perceived as being heard.

It was also apparent that, in some areas, people felt there was little point in putting forward 'issues' to either co-ordinators or council members, and themselves felt uninformed as to what EO was doing; in an attempt to break this impasse I invited people to pass on their suggestions to me, with the assurance that it would definitely reach all co-ordinators and council members, with no names being attached.

So.... having set myself up as the fall guy, and taken it upon myself to elicit feedback and input of any ideas or proposals that could help EO better serve its members, the resultant "Improving EO" document, (collated from some 40 pages of material received), is available for all; if you would like to see a copy, please ask your local co-ordinator or any Council member.

Hopefully it will stimulate positive discussion which will allow EO to move forward.

After all, if we do not live in interesting times, we will not progress as a representative organisation, and any organisation losing 100 members per month is in need of a review.

Malcolm Muckle

14 Springfield Ave, London N10 3SU 0181 442 1643 [Fireflies@easynet.co.uk](mailto:Fireflies@easynet.co.uk)

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In view of the fact that no authority can be wholly trusted, we must aim at having as little authority as possible, and to think out ways by which young people's natural desires and impulses can be utilized in education.

Bertrand Russell in *Sceptical Essays*.

## Another ordinary EO day

As I lay in bed this morning I decided that today I would encourage Seth to write something as we have not done so for weeks (again), also that I would vacuum the floor which has been in need of it at least since we returned (muddled but unbowed) from the Glastonbury festival on Monday. I also decided to write down what we do today just to see where the time does go.

Seth (5 1/4) rushes upstairs (He has been up for ages) and tells me how to say "I am nine years old" in French. He has been listening to a French tape while having breakfast. He rushes off again when I suggest that he might find it more useful to be able to say that he is five.

Downstairs I wander about with coffee and toast while Seth tells me all the combinations of numbers which add up to ten. We did this ages ago but he has rediscovered it this morning using his number blocks. He then reads several books (as he does every morning) including one about constricting snakes. My breakfast is punctuated with interesting facts about these creatures. He informs me that the longest anaconda measured 9.1 metres. We get a ball of string and measure 9.1 metres to see how long the snake was. We are suitably impressed at the length - almost from the front door to the back and Seth engages in some fairly wild speculation about its possible diet.

10am - Seth decides that he would like some toast and as usual I refuse to feed him until he gets dressed. We then put out the washing and go down to inspect the vegetable garden and do a bit of weeding.

When we get tired of weeding (not long) we return to the house and make a game using the skittles but swinging the ball at them on a string for a change. The skittles all have numbers on them and we do lots of addition sums to find our scores. I avoid winning as Seth cannot cope with losing. We move on to a game of catch played with an inflatable globe ball. We have to name a continent each time we catch the ball. This is too easy so we try naming a country in that continent. This keeps us happily occupied until Seth demands to know what the capital of Bulgaria is. My geographical knowledge fails at this point so we get out the atlas to look it up (it is Sofia) The atlas has other interesting things to talk about and in between I receive two phone calls. It is now lunchtime and we still have nothing concrete to show for the morning except the scores from the skittle game.

After lunch Seth reads some more books one of which is a science workbook with some spinners to make to show how colours mix. While I desperately try to get the spinners to work properly Seth mixes colours much more successfully (apart from white) with his paints. I am still struggling to make white from all the rainbow colours so Seth goes into the dining room and writes me a letter. Like almost all his letters it says "to mummy luv Seth" Seth knows that love can be spelt another way but, as he tells me, "It is all right for people to choose their own way of doing things and he likes it spelt that way". I also get a paper folded into a fan which says 'i luv mummy' (fan mail?). Seth then tries out some different arrangements for the skittles to see which is best for getting most down at once and plays his new drum for a while. We have several new drums at the moment so we both try them all out. Seth then plays at turning the hands of his clock and calling out five past eight, ten past

eight, etc. for several hours, well it seems like it. This clock conveniently displays five past as you turn the minute hand to the one etc. he does not know them all yet. Meanwhile I try to clear enough of the floor to vacuum. Seth gets the paints out and does some sponge and finger prints (and eventually hand prints). When this is at last cleared up he goes off to play "educational" computer games. I manage to sort the dining room out a bit and some floor appears. Seth returns and we have a disagreement because he wants all the house plants clustered tightly together to make a forest for his china hedgehog and I do not like this arrangement. Maybe I am mean but I insist on having the plants put back, I know that if I give way the forest is likely to become permanent. I get the washing in.

5pm - Seth sits down to watch a video. As usual I have not even considered what to have for dinner tonight. I make a cup of tea and sort the washing. The phone rings and the tea gets cold and what to have for dinner has become a pressing problem. Seth is saying 'I am so hungry I want my dinner NOW'. After dinner Seth shows Dave the 'new' skittle game. By about 9.30 Seth is in bed - apart from coming down every few minutes to tell us something - and I do not feel like doing anything much so Dave and I watch a movie on TV. No, I did not clean the floor and Seth did not write anything - there was just no time.

Corinne Whitby – Lanbourne, Nursery Drive, Boreham, Essex, CM3 3AH

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My schooling not only failed to teach me what it professed to be teaching, but prevented me from being educated to an extent which infuriates me when I think of all I might have learned at home by myself. - --George Bernard Shaw

## **The Tower of London**

On January 14<sup>th</sup> the Otherwise Club visited the Tower of London to look at the buildings and Crown Jewels and to take part in a metal work workshop.

The Otherwise Club met at the Main Gate, overlooking the Thames and HMS Belfast, very near Tower Bridge. Immediately after entering the Tower many people stopped to sit in the arrow-slit windows sunk into the outside wall. Sitting three abreast in these windows, sheltered from the wind, visitors ate their sandwiches and rested.

Over-looking the Main Gate and arrow slit windows is the heavily fortified and clearly labeled Wakefield Tower. It is possible to walk through this tower but there are no displays in it.

The Bloody Tower, the traditional murder site of the two princes by their uncle, has two rooms which are furnished as they were in Sir Walter Raleigh's day. Outside the lower room is a portcullis and its winch. Other famous prisoners held in this tower include Thomas Cranmer, of Common Prayer Book fame, Archbishop Laud, a fervent supporter of the unity of Church and state in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and the notorious hanging Judge Jeffreys.

Immediately adjacent to the Bloody Tower is the Queen's House. It is a pretty half-timbered structure begun in 1540. In its rooms Guy Fawkes was tortured following the Gunpowder Plot. Today it is the Governor of the Tower's official residence. It is not open to the public and a guard, wearing a bearskin and carrying a gun stands outside to maintain the Governor's privacy.

The Queen's House over-looks Tower Green and the execution site of Anne Boleyn, her eighteen year old cousin Catherine Howard and Lady Jane Grey. Near this execution site is the Beauchamp Tower which houses a small factual display board inside it. There is a seat to sit down on inside and an opportunity to look at the interior walls which are covered with graffiti, giving witness to the suffering of the prisoners.

In 1078 William the Conqueror ordered work to begin on a tower of stone. This Norman Keep is at the core of today's Tower. It is the oldest and the largest of the tower's buildings with walls fifteen feet thick. It was built of stone from Caen brought from France. It was white washed, hence its name – the White Tower.

On the second floor of the White Tower is one of the finest examples of early Norman architecture. Built in the Romanesque style the Chapel of St John is almost totally without ornament. It is massive and severe. The columns in the chapel are short and sturdy, their capitals rude blocks; the plainest way of linking something with a round section to something with a square section



(see diagram).

#### **Block Capital : early C11<sup>th</sup>**

The White Tower is now encircled by two rings of massive walls with towers. Richard I and Henry II built the inner wall and Edward I the outer. Today the Tower of London looks, more or less, as it did at the end of the C13<sup>th</sup> and because of this it is one of the most important examples of medieval architecture.

The Tower's greatest single attraction is the Crown Jewels. It was possible to have a really good look at them in January as there were so few visitors, perhaps because so many of the displays in the other buildings were being refurbished. There were no queues at all to see the Jewels and we were able to walk straight through and to take as much time as we wished to stare at the different crowns and regalia.

The workshop was held in the New Armouries. We were able to leave our bags and coats in a cloakroom area before being supplied with pencils, paper and clipboards. These were necessary because after being split into three groups, we were taken into the armouries to draw patterns from etchings on the armour. Although most of the armour has now gone to Leeds,

there were some very interesting suits of armour, such as one for a giant of nearly seven feet tall and another for a very small man just over three feet. The drawing took 30 minutes and we were then taken back downstairs and into the workshop. At every table there were several strips of copper and tools to press the patterns into the thin sheets of soft copper. The copper was placed on top of black plasticine, and using the blunt artist's modelling tools, the patterns we had copied of the armour were pressed into the copper. The copper was attached to a black band of pseudo-leather using two paper fasteners. It was then possible to fashion this into a bracelet or armband by joining the two ends together with gold thread. All the metal work was impressive and the results effective, really looking like armour.

The Tower was a very worthwhile educational visit. The combination of history, architecture and crafts ensured that there was something of interest for everyone.

Tom

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### **Houseswaps for EO Members.**

A big thank you to all those of you who have joined the new holiday houseswap register. I had quite a few inquiries and I was able to get together enough people to start the register. I hope that there will be a good few house swaps arranged for this year. If you missed the advert in the April EO newsletter, you probably haven't a clue what I'm going on about, so I will write a short summary just for you.

Holiday house swaps are run on mutual respect and honesty. The register contains names, addresses etc. of families who are willing to swap their houses for a weekend/week. All you have to do is find some one on the register who wants a mutual swap. I myself have been on a national charity houseswap register for several years and I can honestly say I have never had any problem with the house swaps and I swap at least three times a year.

To make this register successful we need to have as many families on it as possible. There will be a small fee to join and all profits will go to EO. If you are interested in joining or just want further information please ring or write to me, I will be very happy to hear from you. Best wishes and here's to a happy house swapping experience!

Barbara Thring

15 Hazeldon Rd, Crofton Park, London, SE4 2DD  
Tel: 0181 694 0769 Email: [SL@ENTERPRISE.NET](mailto:SL@ENTERPRISE.NET)

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### **"What do you do?"**

For all of us who stay home all day "educating otherwise", what "do" you say when someone asks, "What do you do?" ...Here it is..

"I am the Administrator/Instructor of an exclusive experimental multi-grade academy designed with the express purpose of enhancing genius and maximizing potential within a select group of creative individuals."

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## REGIONAL GATHERINGS

During the last open Council meeting held at Featherstone Castle, it was decided that EO might usefully establish regionally based gatherings to complement existing local and national events. At present some members are part of active local groups, others do not have the advantage of such a 'resource'. Also, some members enjoy meeting up with EO friends at national get-togethers (including the decision making meetings) while, again, others do not. There are many reasons as to why there is such variable participation by members, e.g. cost, time transport problems, interest and, of great importance, feeling welcome. Regional Gatherings might solve some of these problems and could include:

1) **Speakers:** There is so much information we could share with each other as well as bringing in 'outside' people to inform us about, e.g. home education research; types of intelligence and individual styles of learning; what happens in other countries; and future learning systems.

2) **Workshops and Activities:** These could include science experiments; arts and craft; co-operative games; nature rambles; we could investigate using technology to broaden educational possibilities, e.g. using the Internet, voice activated technology for dyslexics and 'good' CD ROMs; maths at home and we could debate issues such as school 'phobia' etc.

3) **Co-ordinators meetings and legal workshops:** In many regions local co-ordinators actively communicate with each other as well as offering a welcome to new co-ords in the region. This support could be available to all by having a co-ords meeting at each Regional Gathering. Such a meeting could also include a legal workshop (to which anyone would be welcome). In fact it might be that each region develops a team of people who feel confident about dealing with the LEAs as this is difficult for some.

4) **Regional Representation:** At the Regional Gatherings members could share their ideas and grievances with Council Members who can then take this information to the next decision making meeting. This would enable members who cannot get to these meetings to have their say.

I was asked at Featherstone to do some work on encouraging people in the regions to start to draw something of the above together – if this is what members want. Please ring with ideas and offers of help, or even just to make tentative (without obligation) enquires. Initial get-togethers do not need to include formal speakers or be grand in any way; the main thing is just to get people together and to build up from there. Perhaps in the first instance the co-ords from a region, plus interested members, might arrange to meet up at someone's house and invite along a Council member or two? I am happy to act as a link to introduce people to each other if required. Please ring

Gwen Baldock 6 Villa Grove, York YO31 7TB Tel: 01904 421982

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"The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity." - Albert Einstein

## The Postcard Exchange

The Postcard Exchange is intended to spark an interest in geography, as well as give meaning to those "obscure" places on a map.

**To join:** Simply send your mailing address to [DarlaMom@aol.com](mailto:DarlaMom@aol.com) (the official list keeper).

**\*\*DO NOT** send it to the newsletter from where you read this!

**\*\*Send it to me directly at [DarlaMom@aol.com](mailto:DarlaMom@aol.com).** (Please put your email address underneath your other address)

**\*\*For those without internet access:** Please send me your name and address to: Darlene Doucette, 966 Grand Arbre Dr., Bedford, VA 24523-3027 (Please add \$1.00 to cover postage & copying costs.)

Please include the name of the person, list or newsletter from where you heard about the postcard exchange. Thanks!

Even though you might send out several postcards 'right away', please remember that this is "regular" mail and that it takes time to start receiving cards. Expect at least 2-4 weeks before you get a postcard. After two weeks, my kids were very discouraged, but when we got that first postcard in, they were quite excited. Now we receive about 1-2 cards a week and that keeps interest high.

### **"How many people are on the list?"**

A list of names of all those who have shown an interest, will be sent out monthly as long as new names come in. This project is on several mailing lists for homeschoolers and unschoolers. I expect a fairly large amount of people to be interested, which means a large list of names & addresses. You are under NO OBLIGATION to write to EVERYONE on the list. But please show common courtesy by replying to those who take the time to write to you.

### **"So how many do I HAVE to send?"**

Send out as many postcards as you are able to each month, but please try to send out at least 12 per month. Participate as long as you want. (I doubt my kids will tire of getting mail in "their" name.) When interest wanes, drop me a note and I will remove you from the list. (PLEASE remember that your name will have gone out to many people and you may still get more cards. Eventually it will end. <Grin>) Please try to respond to the cards that you receive with a card of your own. Who knows, this might be the start of a lifelong friendship!

### **"ALL these people have my name & address?"**

When you get the list it is very important that you respect the integrity of the project. DO not give out these names and addresses. Only those persons willing to give their own address will get the addresses of other participants. This list of names should NEVER be used for "mailing list" purposes, period!

### **"Ok I have the list -- Now WHAT?"**

Buy or make postcards, and mail those rascals out! Some people have used 4 x 6 photos, but check with your post office. When sending them out, please address them carefully. Unless your child can write neatly, PLEASE parents/guardians address the postcards yourself. Be mindful of the postal workers.

Don't feel like you have to go out and get 100 postcards tomorrow, unless that is in your budget. This is usually the best way to get a lot of postcards in return, as fast as the postman can bring them. But if you can't send out a lot at one time, you need to send out at least 12 per month to make the project work for everyone. Then when you start receiving cards, they will come in a few at a time. That will give you time to research each area and discover its fascinating specialties. Also it will help keep interest high and it won't break your budget.

**"What kind of postcard?"**

Preferably use a postcard that is specific to your state/country or region. Something with a historical landmark, a state flower, or even just a card with the name of your area.

**"What do I put on the postcards?"**

Your name PLEASE! (So the recipient knows who it is from) Then, send a greeting from your family and/or tell about something special in your area. ("Hey, we got 2 feet of snow last night." or "It was balmy 72 degrees today" to make those of us in opposite climates envious. )

Please try to write something about your family so it will be interesting for the recipient. Just a "Hi" or a name isn't as interesting as a personal note about your family or a note about your kids interests. However, these are postcards and can be read by anyone, so be careful what you put on them.

\*\*Above all, remember the project will only work **IF** you send out cards. Please do not join just to receive cards.

\*\*If I get your email updates returned more than 3 times or receive word that mail has been returned from your home address, I will remove your name from the list. If you move or change your email address, please notify me so I can make the necessary corrections.

\*\*You will receive updates once a month. At the beginning of the month, you will receive a listing of the new names & those who wish to be removed. Every other month, you will receive an updated copy of the entire name list with all the additions, corrections, and deletions.

(Editor's note: My family have been members for over a year and have a good stack of postcards – and have sent out more than a few! But we all love getting the atlas out and looking places up, Leah helps with the sticking on of stamps, 37p anywhere out of the EU, and Matthew tells me what to write.)

.....  
"I suppose it is because nearly all children go to school nowadays, and have things arranged for them, that they seem so forlornly unable to produce their own ideas" -Agatha Christie

## **Poll Results Show Wider Public Acceptance of Homeschooling**

The following article is reprinted in abridged form, with the kind permission of Growing Without Schooling. (*Growing Without Schooling*, 2269 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02140. Tel: (617) 864-3100. Subscription \$25/year)

GWS reader sent {GWS} a clipping from the 8/27/97 Chicago Tribune with the headline "Homeschooling is Earning Higher Grade." From that article:

The home school movement – parents teaching children in their houses

instead of sending them to school – is gaining wider acceptance across the U.S. although a majority of Americans oppose the idea, according to an annual education survey.

The 29<sup>th</sup> Gallup Poll on public attitudes towards school shows a continued softening of opposition to homeschooling since the survey began asking the question 12 years ago. In 1985, the poll showed that only 16% of respondents considered home schooling a "good thing", while 73% said it was a "bad thing" and the other 11% were undecided. But in the 1997 poll made public Tuesday, 36% said home schooling is a "good thing", 57% viewed it as a "bad thing" and 7% had no option.

Twelve years ago, only a few thousand parents taught their children at home. Now the number has soared to 1.23 million, according to the Home School Legal Defense Association. This year, the home school movement won more attention when Rebecca Sealfon 13, of Brooklyn, N.Y., won the national spelling bee and Beth Dorman 13, of the Portage Park neighbourhood on Chicago's Northwest Side, won the city spelling bee for the third consecutive year. Both are taught at home by their parents.

Also thrust into the limelight last week was another Chicago area child taught at home: Alexandra Rose 10, of west suburban Woodridge became the first child to present a research paper earlier this month at a scientific conference on insects in Tucson. Her 16 week study on spiders has been so well received that she has been invited to present her findings in October at the Natural History Museum of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington [...]  
Submitted by P. Fielding-Bell, Lancashire.

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#### Co-ordinators Update

London East

Jackie Mason is resigning

#### New Acting Co-ordinators :-

Pemb

Yvette Hartley 01239 820968

Somerset

Ruth Harvey 01823 480878

The Truancy Watch Scheme has caused problems for some home educators. Although some concerned families have taken action as individuals, many areas would be extremely grateful if their local co-ordinator could act on their behalf in bringing the presence of E.O. children to the attention of the Area Organiser for the Truancy Watch. As a check that the information has been correctly understood we could ask for a copy of the memo to be circulated to all participating police officers and EWO's. Perhaps information about impending blitzes could be obtained and shared. For more information see previous magazines or ring me.

The new contact list is due out soon. If your area has no co-ordinator, that important, maybe first contact with E.O. why not find out more about the role from:

Isobel Bogucki Tel: 01403 261178

**Co-ordinator for Fife-** Karen Spry, *new address*, Gardeners Cottage, Kilmarnon Stables, by Cupar, KY15 4NE. 01334 655361

## Chair's Report on the Open Council Meeting

Held at Featherstone Castle, Northumberland - 5 September 1998

### Agenda

1. Minutes of the previous meeting, Kent, 28th June, 1998
2. Matters arising
3. Treasurer (Priscilla Park-Weir) 3.1 Report, 3.2 VAT. We are near the threshold 3.3 Publications. A separate trading company?
4. Gatherings/meetings
  - 4.1 Featherstone Castle: thanks to Keith and Lucy Charlton,
  - 4.2 Current bookings Kingfisher Barn Abindon, Oxon: 5-7 February, 1999 (Jude Ashley Walker and Pam Bellinger): Stokes Barn, Wenlock Edge, Salop: 21-24 May 1999 (Lucy Charlton) and Featherstone Castle: 9th -16th September, 1999.
  - 4.3 Manorbier Youth Hostel (Keith Charlton) 27-30th February, 2000.
5. Steering group report. Decisions taken since last meeting.
6. Co-ordinators: report from Isobel Bogucki, ratifying new co-ordinators.
7. Enquiries secretaries
  - 7.1 Report from Eileen Wilson
  - 7.2 0891 number. Should we change it.
8. Membership secretaries: report (Pam Bellinger)
9. Joining procedures: report from working group (Jill Fisher).
10. National Conference progress report from working group (Malcolm Muckle, Gwen Baldock)
11. Publicity (Beverley Young).
  - 11.1 Report,
  - 11.2 Postcards
12. Home education video (Beverley Young, Priscilla Park Weir)
13. Database (Janet and Mark Wlkinson)
14. Contact List (Jill Fisher)
15. Publications
  - 15.1 Report from Chris Harper,
  - 15.2 SINC Update
  - 15.3 Educating Children at Home by Alan Thomas (Lucy Charlton)
16. Truancy Watch (Christine Adey)
  - 16.1 Further developments
  - 16.2 Cards (Ruth Goffe)
17. Information for LEAs
  - 17.1 Statement of the law (Christine Adey for Anne and Rob Wade)
  - 17.2 Good Practice (Christine Adey).
18. Scotland (Ann Samuel Till)
  - 18.1 Information for Scottish education authorities
  - 18.2 Legal leaflet
19. EPPOC (Beverley Young, Barbara Colpman)
20. Newsletter (Beverley Young)
21. Minutes
  - 21.1 In the newsletter (Angela Smith)
  - 21.2 Electronic distribution (Malcolm Muckle)
22. Advanced notice of agenda (Malcolm Muckle)
23. Ideas for improving EO (Gwen Baldock, Beverley Young, Malcolm Muckle)

- 24. Offers of help (Angela Smith)
- 25. Expenses for Meetings (Beverley Young)
- 26. Any other business

### Notes on the Meeting

The full agenda has been included in this report to better inform members about what issues were covered by the meeting. The notes following summarise the most important information presented and decisions made by the meeting.

Copies of full minutes of the meeting are available by sending an SAE to the General Secretary (see inside back cover of newsletter).

Item 2. The words "Education Otherwise" are now the registered trademark of Education Otherwise Association Ltd.

Item 3. Our Turnover has risen nearly to the VAT threshold. To avoid having to register EO itself for VAT we will set up a separate trading arm for publications etc.

Item 9. The working group on joining procedures recommended that a secretarial agency be employed to deal with the overwhelming volume of post coming to the central address as a first step to speeding up EO's handling of enquiries and membership applications.

Item 10. EO is to make a donation of £1740 to assist home-educating families to attend the Home Education conference being held in April 1999. This is the amount requested from the meeting by Malcolm Muckle who is organising the conference. The meeting felt that there had not been sufficient involvement of EO in the planning process to warrant the conference being an "official" EO event. There was, however, much enthusiasm for the conference and we have asked to have a stall for information and the sale of EO publications and merchandise.

Item 17. Christine Adey presented a revised draft of Information for LEAs which combines her input on best practice from LEAs around the country with legal information which was revised by Anne and Rob Wade. Copies of this draft are available from Christine by sending an SAE (see notice elsewhere in this newsletter).

Item 23. Ideas for improving EO were discussed briefly and the working group looking at changes in enquiries and joining procedures will be considering all the input. The idea of Regional Gatherings was approved in principle and will be investigated further.

#### **Honey Farm:**

EO Concessions no longer available at Sneatondale Honey Farm, East Ayton, Yorkshire. Due to James Fernley having left the company.

#### **DfEE Circular on Home Education : Notice**

The anticipated DfEE Circular to LEAs about the education of all children outside mainstream school, which would have included information about home education by parental preference, has been cancelled. A new circular focusing on school discipline and attendance issues and their prevention will now be drafted. No issues of direct concern to us are now likely.

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# Letters

Dear Fellow EO Members,

I would like to hear from you with advice regarding my daughter (aged 2) and whether it is necessary for her to go to playgroup and socialise with other children at this stage. Although she is an only child at present, I am a childminder and she has the daytime company of two other children close to her in age. At present she goes to three Toddler groups each week, but once she is too old for those; it's supposed to be time for "playgroup". I am a little concerned that whereas now she has quite an active "social life" once she is too old for these groups, she'll miss the company and the stimulation. In your experiences, should I be doing something with her, or just letting her get on with it herself? What did your 2/3 year olds do? What is a good age to start joining clubs and what kinds of clubs did your children enjoy? I know what my own feelings are, but I would like to be able to discuss them with people who have experienced EO from the start (rather than having withdrawn children from school) at least to hear your views. I would welcome all letters and be grateful for all views/ideas.

Sarah Eastol

Lynwood, Back Lebanon, CUPAR, Fife, KY15 4JW. Tel: 01334 657292

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Can anyone offer us advice or comments on this situation? My school-free nearly six year old wants to go to school. I think he should try it if he wishes. He has "a disorder of the development of language", i.e. his language development has been slow and odd. He talks lots now and appears fairly normal. The speech therapists are keen that we should get a statement and try to get a place in a Special Language Unit in a nearby town. I feel very reluctant about going for it. I also know that if we have a statement and then withdraw him, we will have to comply with the statement in home-educating (or de-statement him somehow). But I think he should be allowed to try out his decision.

Underlying this bureaucratic problem is a philosophical one. It is hard to be confident that one is doing the right thing keeping a child out of school, especially if you are not doing much formal work, as we do not. It is even harder to be sure what is best for a child with some level of educational problem. It may be that intensive work would help avert later problems. Nobody is a neutral expert on school or otherwise, but if you can help, please phone or write.

Lindy Brett

32 Blakelow Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire Sk11 7ED (01625) 421505

.....  
Help - looking for friends, I have a wonderful husband, a 1 year old girl and a baby due Christmas Eve. We intend to home-ed our children. Is there anyone who has similar aged kids and similar intentions? We are piano musicians and Pentecostal Christians, we should be self-employed within 6 months focused on piano teaching. Looking for adult and child friendship (days out/ etc. Will reply to all letters.

Christine Caton Greasley, 10 Sycamore Cl, Dukinfield, Cheshire Sk16 5EN

New I.G.C.S.E. Open Examination centre.

Some months ago we wrote to the E.O. newsletter about our problems with taking International GCSE exams. The advantage of International GCSEs, set by the University of Cambridge Board, is that a wide range of subjects can be taken by examination only (as opposed to requiring coursework supervised through a school or college.) This makes the courses well suited to home educators (syllabus leaflets, sample papers, reading lists and standards guidelines are all available from the Cambridge Board). However, there has still existed the problem of sitting these exams. Our local secondary school, after a delay of 7 months, finally agreed to consider letting us sit these exams (a mere £20 per hour for invigilation) – in the meantime, our children were denied the opportunity to take their exams this summer. We therefore felt it time to investigate alternatives and, having set up a small school, have won approval from the Cambridge Board as a IGCSE examination centre. Consequently, as of November, we are offering exam facilities to students following IGCSE examination only courses in English, Maths, History, Accounting, French, Biology, Physics and Natural Economy. (Other subjects open to negotiation)

Although not centrally placed, the Isles of Scilly do offer an idyllic venue for EO families who might wish to accompany their children to take exams. By opting for November exams, there is always plenty of self-catering accommodation available on the island at reasonable prices.

We hope very much that other home educators will be able to support us in this venture as we do need to keep up numbers to a minimum level to make the centre viable. The school will provide a low-key centre particularly suited to those with children unenthusiastic about "going to school" even for exams. Costs will be kept to a minimum – just enough to cover expenses.

We also propose keeping a register of qualified teachers willing to tutor/teach IGCSE subjects. We are particularly keen to make contact with someone able to act as a agricultural advisory teacher/moderator.

Please do get in touch if any of these points are of interest.

Richard and Jenny Morton. Little Arthur Independent School, St Martin's, Isles of Scilly, Cornwall (Tel:01720 422457 (evenings only))

.....  
This is a letter to all EO members in Kent

We will be starting the Maidstone group again in Baring soon, and seriously need some more families to join us. We started the group at the beginning of the year with 13 families and had some good fun, but by the last meeting in July we only had 3, which is not enough to pay the rent on the hall.

We try to be quite structured, with a writers group and craft activities etc. and will organise group outings when we have enough support. The meetings are on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month from 11.00 am to 3 pm at a cost of £3 per family. We have a nice size hall with a playground and football pitch. We need children of 5+ to join in activities, but of course if they have younger siblings they are also welcome.

Please phone Jean Searles if you are interested on 01622 820206  
.....

My name is Denise Harris, I am the mother of six children, Emma 14 yrs, Sandra 11 years, Anna 10 years, Antonio 8 years, Dominic 4 years, Angelo 16 months. Antonio my first son and fourth child is very profoundly disabled.

He was born normal and suffered epileptic fits after whooping cough vaccination at the age of 3 1/2 months old. They were severe, up to 60 fits per day. He was not given the appropriate treatment for seven weeks, and his brain shrunk causing profound damage, most to the cortex.

He is blind, partially deaf, has no useful understanding to communicate, he cannot do anything as he has no co-ordination. He cannot swallow fluids and is fed by a tube to his stomach. He still has daily fits. As he screams excessively and cannot make any interpretation of the world, with many other medical needs, I do not send him to school, as I feel I can take care of him better at home. You need love and dedication along with a lot of patience to care for him. I have decided that he is to have the happiest life I can give him as it will be a short life. He has never been in respite, as despite all his problems he is a member of our family and so deserves holidays the same as the others.

I am not going to say life is easy, because it is not, I have been to the bottomless pit of despair until I could not go any further. The only way now is up. I get no support from the so called professionals, social services have been appalling. My decision to home educate has got me into a lot of trouble. But being a determined person, I have got through. Professionals decide for you that you cannot cope, a lot without even meeting you. But when you have been through this situation you cope day by day. In the beginning it seems hopeless, now every hopeless situation turns into an achievement.

I would like dearly to be in contact with any other member with a child with disability who believes in how I bring up and care for my son. Despite all that I have done I still feel alone in my decision.

Denise Harris, 92 South Rd, Erdington, Birmingham, W. Midlands, B23 6ES

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I'm educating my 14 year old daughter at home but I have few EO contacts that I can really relate to. I'm single parenting and my daughter has severe learning disabilities and autistic tendencies. I have lots of pen friends who home-educate but non of them are pagans and none of my pagan pals home educate. I would love to hear from people who are both home educate and are also pagan. I am an eclectic hedge-witch and I'm particularly interested in visualisation, path working and healing. So if there are any parents who love to write and receive long chatty letters I'll be glad to hear from you.

Sunny Marhn

15 Fisher Rd, Bridgemary, Gosport, Hants, PO13 0JJ (01329) 827831  
.....

LDS mum who has two children, (5 and 7 months), would like contact with other LDS home educating families Contact

Tracey Billson 50 Rectory Gdns, Todwick, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S26 1JU

Dear EO,

My 11 year old son, Alan, has been home educated for a year. Alan studies music and attended a school that also taught cultivation (of vegetables, grapes and animals). However, this education was not guaranteed to continue, so we have made other arrangements.

Alan has studied English with a university professor in this last year but the professor's pupils are too old for us to do exchange visits. We are bilingual in French-German. We live 50 km from Italy, in Grasse about 10km from the sea and Cannes. We would like to correspond with a family (English or a mixture) with a view to exchange visits that can improve the children's languages

Alan's hobbies are VVT, swimming, jigsaw puzzles, chess and calligraphy.

Contact: Maïthé Chambellan

Mas de la Tourache A%, 1 chemin de la Tourache, 06130 Grasse

Tel: 00 33 4 93 091 542 (French only please)

Fax: 00 33 4 93 751 760

.....  
Why I have decided to home educate - As a child I loved to learn. I taught myself to read when I was three, my 12 times tables by age six and by age 12 was told (actually by a teacher!) that I had a brilliant scientific mind.

Then followed a year of being terrorized by the most sarcastic teacher I ever met, his subject –science! I was crushed but not withstanding went to college – mainly to get a degree so I could do research. Heavily interested in evolution, I chose biology, but in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year, my scientific brain began to pull holes in everything. Coupled with an experience of God, I resolved to scientifically disprove Darwin's Evolutionary Theory. Despite sound arguments, I was heavily penalized and came out with a 3<sup>rd</sup> class honour. Shattered dreams because individualistic thought was, as it always has been, frowned upon.

It has taken many years to find an alternative occupation and the sense of not having achieved anything to disappear. Yet, I have achieved, because being a full-time mother of a child who "should" begin school this year, I'm going to give her the chance to develop, to grow and explore and find the confidence to be. It's like being a child again and despite occasional panics and paranoias – home schooling can be very healing and a wonderful way of giving your children the childhood you may never have had.

Carole Virgo, 10 Victoria St, Earls Barton, Northants. NN6 0LJ

.....  
"To observe people in conflict is a necessary part of a child's education. It helps him to understand and accept his own occasional hostilities and to realize that differing opinions need not imply an absence of love."

Milton R. Sapirstein

**Editors note:** The last edition caused strong reactions. I could have filled most of the newsletter with reaction - these letters are representative.

Having been members of EO for about 10 years, our family have enjoyed reading the newsletter even though we may not have agreed with all that has been written in it, we recognise the many differences we in EO have.

We feel however, we must object very strongly to the inclusion of the excerpt by Philip Larkin in the August 98 newsletter.

One of the reason some parents home educate is to protect their children from the influence of bad language. We also choose not to have material containing such language in our homes. We hope that this was a 'one off' because we would be sorry to lose our newsletter.

The Taylor Family

40 Knowsley Road, Wiltshire, Blackburn, Lancs, BB1 9PX Tel: 01254 246773

To be sent to the EO council as well,

I find two paragraphs on page 49 of the August 98 EO newsletter to be highly sexist, offensive and hypocritical.

The first of which includes the phrase: "...it (sexism) is conveyed more strongly by fathers, because sexism is the language of men." This is sexist, offensive and hypocritical, and written in the language of women at the wildest extreme of feminism.

The next paragraph states that: "it is vital to be working towards a situation, within the two parent families, where fathers are committed to dual parenting..." This statement is also sexist and offensive and obviously written by "man-hating feminists" since the word "father" could easily have been replaced by the words "both parents".

I find this totally unacceptable in a newsletter concerned with education, and suggest you either ban all sexism, or allow men to be equally sexist as you appear to allow women.

Chris Satonis

10 Duffry Terrace, Wattsville, Gwent, NP 1 7QN

EO and affiliation to EPOCH

I saw mention of the above in the latest issue of the EO newsletter. The context was that this was discussed at the June 1998 Open Council Meeting. I am writing to say that my wife and I - members of EO for around seven years - would be most disappointed were EO to affiliate to EPOCH. This is not simply because we believe that corporal discipline - delivered in a controlled way in response to (amongst other things) deliberate, willful disobedience - has a place in family life, it is rather that this affiliation would alienate some members of EO.

The back page of the newsletter describes EO and its principle aims. If these were to include the abolition of corporal discipline then the it would no longer be the same broad organisation and would have a change of emphasis.

By all means let EO be a forum for discussing wider issues of parenting, but the Home Education movement as a whole in the UK would be a lot poorer were EO to endorse officially only some styles of parenting.

I trust this is helpful. With all good wishes

A G Bright, 22 Peridot Street, Becton, London, E6 5LZ

Tel: 0171 474 9601 e-mail [a\\_e.bright@virgin.net](mailto:a_e.bright@virgin.net)

**Editor:** This letter was edited – the original was several pages long!

Dear EO,

I have enjoyed reading the latest EO Newsletter with its libertarian theme. It has reminded me of the ideals with which we began our life as parents, and has made me review where I am now 25 years later.

I read all the articles carefully and more or less at one sitting. When I reached the end, however, I felt I had been experiencing a contradiction somewhere: although the content of the pieces was about freedom and noninterference, the tone was at times quite prescriptive - you must not be sexist, or racist, you must not discipline a child, you must listen to what someone else in particular has said is right when deciding on their upbringing. I felt this orthodoxy was another possible strait jacket.

It is impossible to be completely neutral in our dealings with children. If for example we are conveying to them that there is no GOD (perhaps denying their own experience of an invisible world?) or adopting a specific attitude to male/female roles and relations then we are influencing them in specific ways.

I have come to the conclusion it is better to reflect honestly what you are rather than try hard to be something you are not - and regret later. We all have different strengths and weaknesses, different past experiences and styles of parenting and will choose different points along a continuum between a libertarian and authoritarian approach.

My experience of having six children was that inevitably my ideals of self regulation gradually became modified. I started from the assumption that my first response would be "yes" rather than "no" but this was not always possible in the event.[...]

In my mind the libertarian approach to children's education is founded on faith that they will know in a deep sense what is right for themselves and grow in to taking their own decisions – but my point of disagreement is over whether at an early age children know enough about the world they've been born into to realize that certain activities [...] will do them harm. Most of these concerns have their origin in my desire for them to be healthy and I think it is only gradually that they can learn to take this like of responsibility for themselves. In the end the only insurance is to do what you feel is right at the time so that when they grow up and you discuss their childhood you can feel confident in the decisions that you took to the best of your ability at the time that you made them.

Jackie Fearnley, Bretan lodge, Goathland North Yorks Tel: 01947 896481

.....  
Being one of those E.O. members who is a firm believer in autonomous education but, due to my own damaging past experiences of being taught and judged, not confident in my ability to write something that would be "good enough" about it, I didn't contribute to the August newsletter.

I must though, write briefly in appreciation of those of you who did, and to say thank you all, especially Belinda to putting it all together. I recently read John Holt's "Never too Late" in which he mentions one of his favorite proverbs, by Shaw. I would like to include it now, as it seems to sum it up for me: "Be sure to get what you like, or else you will have to like what you get".

Sally Jarvis.

.....

Dear EO

Thank you for a brilliant newsletter on Autonomous Education. I've been a member now for about 10 years and have often felt alienated and inadequate after reading newsletters. Once I let my membership lapse for a while as I didn't really feel I belonged – everyone who wrote seemed to "teach" to some extent and I didn't and don't believe in that approach. So August's newsletter was one I felt completely in tune with for the first time.

I'd also like to add a book to the booklist on Autonomous Education – "Real Education: Varieties of Freedom" by David Gribble. Published 1998 by Lib Ed. Price £8.99. A description and analysis of 15 democratic schools around the world, where the central issues are care, respect and freedom. I was delighted to see the philosophy of us autonomous educators put as succinctly as I've ever seen it in the chapter on Mirambika school in New Delhi: the first principle of true teaching is: NOTHING CAN BE TAUGHT

Jane Dent

318 Southwark Park Road, London, SE16 2HA Tel: 0171 237 1318

Dear EO,

Our youngest daughter was home-educated for five years and benefited from it. She thrived from this autonomous approach

I am a regular and keen subscriber to EO newsletter and am a teacher myself. I was very saddened to read how virulent school was portrayed in the August newsletter by several of the articles.

Education to me is of tolerance, flexibility and love – not a continual barrage of the "terrible school system". Hopefully we educated our daughter to see that different educational arrangements suit different people and life styles. I also hope, that in my classroom, there is warmth, discovery, fun and value for each child. Time to listen, store and appreciate everyone's point of view.

Helping all our children to discriminate and criticize is positive, but I feel it is negative and fanatical to vilify school and portray it as such an evil institution.

Hannah Sabel  
97 Norman Court, Pinner, Middlesex, HA5 3QN Tel: 0181 866 3981

Heartfelt thanks to Belinda for a truly beautiful August newsletter.

I wholly support her views on school and the adverse effect it has on a child's development into a whole and self-motivated person. None of my four children, now aged between 15 and 21, have ever been to school. At 16/17 years of age, the eldest three have, of their own choice, gone to the local college to gain more Cases and A Levels. Abby at 15 is still at home being herself. I firmly believe that we have given our children the freedom to chose a path which they find appropriate.

However I do find it surprising that Belinda in her family introduction immediately draws attention to the university achievements of herself and her husband. I acknowledge that they are something to be proud of, says I who gained one A level before becoming brain dead! But I think, we readers can identify with her ideals and admire her ability to carry them out – she does not need to educationally qualify herself to us.

Tessa Wright

Stonylane Farm, Alburgh, Harleston, Norfolk, IP20 0BS

Dear EO – Sammy and Belinda

I am referring to your editorials in the August 98 newsletter. With all the undeniable respect that the work of Alice Miller (and, by self-proclaimed derivation, yours) deserves for its earnestness and courage, it is no longer possible to view a person's whole life as determined by parental attitudes and social pressures. Aside from the ground breaking work of thinkers such as James Hillman and Diane Eyer, people the world over are beginning to realize that ascribing such crushing weight to one's parents' mistakes means denying one's own strength of character, undermining one's ability to outgrow the family, and ultimately renouncing responsibility for shaping one's life. Parents are people, with tastes, inclinations, and the duty to fulfil a destiny of their own. They are not in this world to shoulder the blame of some original sin, but to protect and guide their kids and to show by example what it is like to live one's life as human beings. And the life of a human being, in my view, is flavoured by the quality of the balance it achieves between serious discipline and joyful abandon.

In answer to your questions about the imagination, the human imagination has shown its indestructible power for several thousand years now, against such odds as would make the Misses Stodd and Trunchbull look positively insignificant. Yes, I can imagine something in place of mysogyny, because there are so many men out there that dare to defy commonplace and strive day by day with humour and intelligence towards the actualization of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century vision. Yes, I can imagine freedom, because I know that some of us are ready to risk their life in its name.

And please, this is not personal, but how can a libertarian group possibly quote Philip Larkin to support radical ideals? Sammy, you brilliantly summarize years of feminist thinking in your piece, Have you read what Larkin says on women in the letters that were given ample newspaper coverage a couple of years ago? I hope not. And have your kids read the whole of that depressingly misanthropic non-poem you partially quote? I hope not. For that ain't the verse, that is some of the verst dross efer written.

A friendship is like a journey, and as Lao Tzu said, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. I like to think these lines will be such a step for us.

Cristina Viti, 12 Bertie Road, London, NW10 2LH

.....  
**You know you are home educating when.....**

Your favorite Christmas gift was a gift certificate to a book store,  
Your kids think that reading history is best accomplished while lying on the floor with their head resting on the side of their patient dog,  
Your partner can walk in at the end of a long day and tell how the science experiment went just by looking at the house,  
Your neighbors think you are insane,  
You can take the time to look at a tiny spider on a log,  
You're almost afraid to put your hand in your bag because you not sure if your 6yo has put something that's alive (or possibly not alive, but once was) to take home to view under the microscope,  
Talking out loud to yourself is a parent/teacher conference,  
You step on math manipulatives in your pre-dawn stumble to the bathroom,  
Your friends don't want to help you move because you have so many books.

## RESOURCE RECOMMENDATIONS

### **GCSE Correspondence Courses**

If any EO members are considering using The National Extension College correspondence courses, I would suggest they contact Open Learning Centre International who offer a special package for under 16's. The course includes all the NEC course material, telephone contact with a tutor and the marking of assignments, course work and 'mock' exam paper. The cost for a GCSE is £135 (£130 for any subsequent courses) which is much cheaper than the NEC.

**Open Learning Centre International, 24 King St, Carmarthen, SA31 1BS  
Tel. 07000 24 7000**

### **Craft and Technology Supplies**

I have recently come across an excellent craft and technology catalogue which I would like to recommend to other home educators.

The catalogue contains every imaginable Art material; dyes, clay, paints, foil, bookbinding linen, coconut paper, even stone for carving. They also sell a range of un-dyed ties, oven gloves, bags to decorate yourself.

There are electronics packs, tiny solar panels and tools ranging from a 30p scraper to expensive drills and a large range of reasonably priced kits. You can make your own microscope (£3.50), construct a steam engine or rocket, build a house out of tiny bricks.

We have just received our first order, which includes kits for a solar powered copper fountain, sundial and steam powered boat. These are not press out and clip together kits, but detailed instructions, templates and materials. You will need appropriate tools and younger children will need lots of help.

There is no minimum order, but the prices are all plus vat. The representative in England (the company is German), an ex Technology Teacher, says he will go to local groups and demonstrate the products. Catalogues are available from;

**OPITEC - Tel. 01703 44 65 15**

Sue Hutchin, Oakwood, Sparrow Hatch Lane, Bethersden, Ashford, Kent

**EDITING THE NEWSLETTER - VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR NEXT YEAR. PLEASE CONTACT THE NEWSLETTER CO-ORDINATOR IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT MORE.**

\*\*\*\*\*COMPETITION\*\*\*\*\*

**Design and Win a New EO T-shirt**

Would any child like to design a new EO T-shirt? It can be words or a picture. It should have "Education Otherwise" on it somewhere and will be printed on the front only of a dark/mld coloured T-shirt.

Send your Ideas by 31st October to:

T-shirt Competition, PO BOX 5, Belvedere, Kent. DA17 5ZU

Winner will be announced in the December Newsletter.

**UK Home Education Support Internet mailing list**

If you would like to join this online discussion and support forum, send an email with just the following line in the message area: SUBSCRIBE UK-HOME-ED

Your Name (Substituting your name for 'Your Name') and send this to:

[LISTSERV@LISTSERV.AOL.COM](mailto:LISTSERV@LISTSERV.AOL.COM).

If you experience any difficulties subscribing, please email:

[UK-HOME-ED-REQUEST@AOL.COM](mailto:UK-HOME-ED-REQUEST@AOL.COM)

**HES FES '99**

The Home Educators Seaside Festival is to take place next year in Dorset from Thursday 13th to Tuesday 18th May 99. This follows on from the success of this year's camp and will again be held at Monkton Wylde. Estimated cost is around £30 per family. More details of the event and how to book to follow in the next newsletter. Andy Blewett 0181 306 0168 [aannd@mcmill.com](mailto:aannd@mcmill.com)

**School is not Compulsory T-shirts now available!!!**

Features EO kicked open triangle logo. £5.00 adult & £3.50 child (plus p&p).

Please send large SAE for full details and order form to; T-shirts

PO Box 5, Belvedere, Kent, DA17 5ZU Phone Angie 0181 300 7236

[apullin@btinternet.com](mailto:apullin@btinternet.com) Or Andy 0191 306 0168 [aannd@mcmill.com](mailto:aannd@mcmill.com)

**Home based Education: Past, Present and Future A One Day Conference.**

10:00am – 5:00 pm 7th Nov 1998. at Open University Conference Centre.

344–354 Gray's Inn Rd, London, WC1X 8BP

Guest speakers include:

**Roland Meighan** – Special Professor of Education, Nottingham University

**Sarah Guthrie** – Founder member of Education Otherwise, Journalist and author of the "Archie" Cartoons.

**AND Suzannah Sheffer**- Editor of Growing Without Schooling for 11 years and

author of "A Sense of Self: Listening to Homeschooled Adolescent Girls" and

"Writing Because We Love To: Homeschoolers at Work"

**ALSO** videos, discussion rooms, views of grown up home educated young

people and more.....£35 individuals £50 institutions (lunch included). For

tickets and/or more information contact: Bronwin Sharp, O U School of

Education. Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA, Tel: 01908 652994

## REGIONAL DIARY

EVENTS ORGANISERS PLEASE REMEMBER, WHEN GIVING FULL DETAILS OF ACTIVITIES, THAT THE NEWSLETTER CAN BE READ BY PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT MEMBERS OF EO

*All regular meetings listed below will now be automatically included in every issue. Please notify the Newsletter Co-ordinator of any changes.*

### BATH

**Hedgehogs** meet for a wide variety of outings and events.

Contact: Jo Ball & Andy Hannen,  
25 Larkhall Place BA1 6SF  
Ros 01225 471253

### BERKSHIRE

**Wednesdays** - Ice skating at John Nike Leisure Centre, Bracknell, 1.30pm - 4pm (lesson 1.30 - 2) £1.50 including lesson & skate hire. Close to M4, A329M.

**Fridays** - Indoor and outdoor activities at Woodford Park, Woodley, Reading, 1pm - 4pm, £3 per family. Table tennis, kite flying, model boats  
Contact: Pat Connor 0118 9662123  
2, Whitegates Lane, Reading  
RG6 1ED

**Home Learners Group** every Monday for visits, walks, picnics etc & alternate Thursdays at Legoland  
Contact: Liz 01344 420235

### BRISTOL

**Alternate Mondays** - Ice skating

**Alternate Tuesdays** - Swimming at Bishopsworth Pool, 1.30 - 2.30

**Fridays**, Totterdown YMCA, 10.45 - 2.00, term time only.

Contact: Kathy Nott 0117 966 8265

### BUCKS (SOUTH)

**Fortnightly** meetings in a church hall, crafts and other activities, £2 per session.

Contact: Trish 01494 783 398

### CAMBRIDGE

**Regular monthly** meetings at St Matthews Church Hall, nr Grafton Centre.

**Fridays** 5-8 yrs, French group (Alliance Francaise £3.50), shared lunch, music group (£2.50)  
Contact: Penny 01223 322703

**Monthly at Alconbury**, activities run by Christian group. All welcome  
Contact: Audrey Hill 01480 219881

### CLEVELAND & DURHAM

**Last Wednesday of the month**

Contact: Pauline 01642 55 628

### CORNWALL

Contact: Anna Wheeler 01209 890378

### DERBYSHIRE

**Wednesdays** - 11am-3pm.

1<sup>st</sup> Wed Watermeadows, Mansfield (swimming), 2<sup>nd</sup> Wed, Atlow nr Ashbourne, 3<sup>rd</sup> Wed, Matlock area, 4<sup>th</sup> Wed Long Eaton area.

Contact: Trevor Denyer 01629 56609

### DEVON

Contact: Sammy & Nick Vidal-Hall  
01548 830716  
Linda & Paul Hitchman  
01392 660216

### DORSET (BOURNEMOUTH)

**Weekly** meetings and visits.

Contact: David Dowl 01202 763688  
88 Westcliff Rd Westbourne  
Bournemouth BH4 8BG  
Send SAE for details

### ESSEX

**Essex Epicycle** gives details of all events. £2.50 for 4 issues.

Contact: Sandie Cottee 01268 73325  
17 south View Rd, Rettendon,  
Chelmsford CM3 8DX

### FIFE

**Outings & get togethers**

Contact: Karen Spy 01337 830976

**HEREFORD AND WORCESTER**  
Second Wednesday of each month  
at Yvonne Rowse's house, near  
Kidderminster.

Last Wednesday of each month  
Jane Charles and Chris Harper's  
house near Malvern.  
Contact: Yvonne Rowse 01209 400750

**HERTFORDSHIRE**  
Fortnightly Thursdays in Hatfield  
Contact: Jeffrey Bengé 0181 442 7528

**ISLE OF WIGHT**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month  
gathering/workshop  
Weekly activities at Newport Youth  
Club 10am - 1pm  
Contact: Rachel 01983 872997  
Alison 01983 563862

**KENT**  
Regular meetings & activities:  
**Canterbury** -  
Contact: Anita 01227 722140  
**Bishopsbourne** -  
Contact: Hannah 01303 892417  
**Barming** -  
Contact: Jean 01622 820206  
**Dartford** -  
Contact: Angie 0181 3007238  
Events list available.  
Contact: Send sae to Amanda Mackenzie  
16, Bramblefree Cott's, Borstal  
Rochester, ME1 3TN,

**LANCASHIRE**  
Monthly in Bolton, St Johns Hall,  
Darwen.  
Contact: Angelika Walter 01254 603 497  
108 Tockholes Rd, Darwen  
BB3 1LL (SAE please)

**LEICESTERSHIRE**  
Monthly meetings at Friends Meeting  
House, Leicester plus meetings at  
homes, visits, newsletter etc.  
Contact: Lucy Charlton 0116 2592118

**LONDON**  
CHOICE- newsletter covering events,  
info, views in London & SE £4.50pa

Contact: PO Box 5, Belvedere DA17 52U  
Angie 0181 300 7236  
Andy 0181 306 0168  
http://choice.memail.com  
<eechoice@memail.com>

**Mondays (alternate)** Hubert House,  
Temple Hill, Dartford. Playing,  
games, projects, garden, hall & art  
room.  
Contact: Angie 0181 300 7236  
Andy 0181 306 9999

**Tuesdays** - 11am Chissold Park  
playground.  
Contact: Charlotte 0171 254 0419  
**Wednesdays** - Honor Oak playground.  
Contact: Keith Hertog 0181 776 859  
**Fridays** - 11 - 2, Dartford Hall,  
Garden, art room, dining room.  
Contact: Mary or Andy 0181 306 0168

**MANCHESTER**  
Bi-weekly at Peel Moat Sports  
Centre, Stockport. Sports, games, soft  
play, gym (over 16's) £1.10 per child.  
Monthly Art Classes at Stockport Art  
Gallery and meeting at Friends  
Meeting House for older children.  
Contact: Gil Wilson 0161 442 8723

**NORFOLK**  
NEON gives details of all events. £1  
plus four large saes.  
Contact: Ali Willer 28 Cozens-Hardy Rd  
Sprowston, Norwich. NR7 8QP

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**  
Tuesdays & Fridays weekly activities  
and visits including Kingsthorpe  
Community Centre, Museums, Parks,  
Wacky Warehouse, factories etc  
Contact: sae to Mr & Mrs F Benham  
4 Pilgrim Way, Wellingborough,  
Northants NN8 2AQ

**OXFORD**  
Weekly meetings - 267 Marston Rd.  
Classes in Art, (all ages) Philosophy  
(over 8's) German, (all ages).  
Fortnightly, Science Theory &  
Speakers Corner.  
Monthly, parents meetings  
Contact: Wendy Plested 01865 514973

## SUFFOLK

Meetings every 3 weeks with grant-aided professional workshops.

Contact: Sarah Guthrie 01379 783678

## SURREY

**Fridays** - Ice skating at the Spectrum 1.30-2.30, £2.35 (+65p for group lesson).

**Tuesdays**- fortnightly visits, walks etc around Guildford. (SAE please)

Contact: Penny Meader, 11 Thompsons Ct, Pirbright, Woking GU24 0JG

## SUSSEX

There is something happening nearly every day,

Contact: Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178

Anne Rix 01435 862794

**Tuesday Club** at Lindfield

Contact: Liz Evans 01444 414058

**Monthly Newsletter/ Events List** - £8pa or £4 for 6 months, cheques to ESEO please.

Contact: Lyndon Pugh, The Barn, Mongers Farm, Barcombe, Lewes BN8 5BQ

## TAYSIDE

Lots of different activities each month.

Contact: Catriona Morrison 01382 864930

## WALES

**Mondays** - Cardigan area, meetings & outings nr Newport

Contact: Anne Pope 01239 710905

**Monthly** meetings in Llanelli/ Swansea area.

Contact: Sue Haggerty 01269 861902

**Weekly** meetings in NE Wales / Borders area.

Contact: Genny Bove 01978 757489

49 Westminster Rd, Moss Valley, Wrexham LL11 6DH  
£2 for a year's listing

## WEST MIDLANDS

### • Birmingham

**Alternate Mondays** - 10am - 4pm, St Paul's Venture, Malvern St (A-Z, p90, 2B). Grassed playground, urban farm, football pitch, indoor space. £1 per family plus 50p per

child. Drinks (tea, coffee, squash) provided, bring packed lunch.

Contact: Rod Drury 01384 349064

Dee westbury 01527 452329

**Last Wednesday** of each month 10.30 - 12.30, Centre for the Child, Central Library. Three multimedia computers.

Contact: Rod Drury 01384 349064

### • Dudley - Wolverhampton

**Third Friday** of each month, 10.30 - 3.30, Cotwall End Nature Centre, Dudley (A-Z p41 5H). Twenty acre site with walks, play areas, ponds. Wildlife, heated room. £1 per family plus 50p per child. Drinks provided (tea, coffee, squash), bring a packed lunch.

Contact: Rod Drury 01384 349 064

### • Walsall

**First Thursday** of each month 1.30 - 3.30.

Contact: Penny Clarke 01922 745465

## YORKSHIRE, NORTH & EAST

**Regular** meetings & visits etc

Contact: Meraylah Allwood 01904 448643  
jemergram @ zetnet.co.uk

## YORKSHIRE - WEST

**Outings & activities.**

Contact: Diane 01484 846946

**First & third Wednesdays** 10.30 -

1.00, Ground Floor Centre, Hebden Bridge. Other activities arranged.

Contact: Katherine 01422 844459

**Last Thursday** of each month 11.00 - 1.30 at the Civic Centre, Huddersfield.

Contact: Diane 01484 846946

Clare 0113 2690061

**Second Friday** of the month, 1.00 - 4.00at Moortown Baptist Church, King Lane, Leeds. £2 per family.

Contact: Judith 0113 2265515

Clare 0113 2690061

**Tuesdays** - 10.30 term time - swimming at Shipley.

Contact: Julia 01274 487182

# Advertisements

## JOBS JOBS JOBS!!!!

**Volunteers are needed for the following posts:**

### **College Admissions:**

We need a member who is experienced with, and knowledgeable of, college entry for pre-16s – OR – someone who is prepared to inform themselves so that they can help members with this sort of query. The volunteer might write into the newsletter occasionally and ask for members experiences so that evidence of 'good practice' can be shared with members and other colleges. In addition they could write up a small summary document \* for the newsletter and to enable EOers to have something to present to college Principals: this would be very helpful. \* any document that goes out in EO's name must be ratified by the Governing Council. This is normal procedure for any organisation.

### **Co-ordinator for the Small Jobs List:**

This list is made up of members who have offered to help in particular ways. This idea is to match such offers with someone who needs help and can 'detach' a suitable section of their EO work. Again, the volunteer for the job could be quite active in promoting this exchange of help through the newsletter (This request may post-date offers of co-ordinating already submitted)

### **Membership Secretary:**

For Greater London and the South East urgently required. Please contact Pam Bellinger on (01233) 814999 for an informal chat.

### **Special Needs CO-Ordinator:**

Leslie needs to step down from this work but has kindly offered to continue helping until the end of the year. Leslie holds a file of information, including a list of members who have offered to help in general or who have said they can provide support for families with specific needs. Members who have offered to co-ordinate this team in the past, plus any new people, would be very welcome to contact me. This is a complex area, and needs a volunteer who knows about Statementing, grants for carers, de-registering from Special Schools etc. Apply to Lucy Charlton, General Secretary (see back page)

**BUY**

**Support your Favourite Charity This Christmas!**

**EO**

**Greetings Cards  
Fab! - David Blunkett**

In boxes of 6 assorted designs featuring Archie and Mrs G b/w line drawings/blank inside for your own message. Prices & info from Beverley Young: 01722 492245

**EO National Gathering**

**In Oxfordshire 5 -7<sup>th</sup> February 1999 Decadent Weekend in historic Abingdon, in converted barn surrounded by water meadows. En-suite bedrooms, chips and ice cream. EOers never had it so good (in the winter) For details send SAE and photo to: Jude Ashely-Walker, 1 the Firs, Dodpits, NINGWOOD, PO41 0TL (Photo not strictly necessary)**

Services and products advertised on these pages have not been endorsed by Education Otherwise

### Family Weeks at Monkton Wyld Court (Dorset)

February 14<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> 1999

February 21<sup>st</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> 1999

£140 Adults

£80 Children 5 – 15 years old

£45 Children 2 – 4 years old  
(some concessions available)

Five days for all ages, with time to enjoy the peace of the countryside.

You will also be very welcome to initiate some activities for yourself.

Each family week will have a flavour of its own with unique activities led by different leaders.

For further details 01297 560342.

### Young Writer:

inspirational magazine for all young writers aged 16 and under – lively, fun in full colour with no adverts. Packed with excellent writing by young people, good advice, competitions, book news etc. Three-issue annual subscription costs only £6.50.

Tel/Fax: 01544 318901 or e-mail: [youngwriter@enterprise.net](mailto:youngwriter@enterprise.net) for FREE inspection copy.

### Truancy Information Cards

These cards (5cm x 9cm) have been produced by our Legal team for children to carry if out on their own. They state that the child is home educated and police and LEA officials have no power to detain child. Education act is quoted on other side.

They are *not* ID cards, there is no space for a name.

If you would like one send a SAE AND 2x 2nd class stamps (to cover cost of laminating) to:

'Choice in Education' (TIC) PO Box 5, Belvedere, Kent, DA17 5ZU

### Single Parents/Low Income Families

Need extra cash to support your E.O. activities/lifestyle? Unable to go out to work? Work part time from home. No experience necessary. No financial risk. For an immediate start send a stamped SAE to:

The Home Marketing Network  
C/o 71 Wheatlands, Stevenage,  
Herts. SG2 0JU

### STEINER/WALDORFSCHOOL

We are a small group of parents interested in looking at the possibility of setting up an alternative school – in the Steiner Waldorf tradition – in the Greater Manchester area. As a first step we would like to set up a register of people who may be interested in such a project. We hope that a good response will result in an exhibition and meeting to take plans further. Christina Cooke – 7 Church Road, Heaton Norvis, Stockport SK4 1LY (0161 4774368) Please send an SAE

### Sunflower Montessori School

welcomes children on a flexible basis between the ages of five to nine either to supplement or enhance the work being carried out at home with their parents. Our method of teaching is such that a child's programme can be tailor made to suit their individual requirements and grow with the child.

To find out more please contact us at Sunflower Montessori School, 8 Victoria Road, Twickenham, Middlesex, TW1 3HW. Tel: 0181 891 2675 Fax: 0181 891 1204

#### **MERCURIUS(UK)**

PO Box 1379, Swindon, SN1 3SN  
Tel/Fax: 01793 431480

Our complete range of school supplies are from natural /environmentally friendly sources wherever possible. They are tailored to the needs of Rudolf Steiner Schools and are ideal for Home Teachers.

Prices as for schools. Please contact us for our free catalogue.

#### **The Libertarian Gathering**

The 1<sup>st</sup> LFN Winter Gathering to be in March is aimed at families who subscribe to be free and those following a libertarian autonomous path. An opportunity to share ideas, and explore the remote beauty of Dartmoor National Park. The gathering will take place at Bellever Youth Hostel, with magnificent views over moorland. There are family rooms/shared bedrooms, kitchen, large dining area and cozy lounge with log fire. Please contact Corinne Lindsey on 01626 361856.

#### **Choice**

The monthly independent publication for Home Educators  
[http://www.choice.mcmail.com/choice\\_he@mcmail.com](http://www.choice.mcmail.com/choice_he@mcmail.com) A year's postal subscription costs £4.50 please make cheques or postal orders out to A Pullin and send to Choice  
PO Box 5 Belvedere, Kent, DA175ZU  
**Send large SAE for sample copy.**  
Phone Angle 0181 300 7236

#### **HERO books:**

All those homeschooling books you couldn't get in England – now you can! 20% off list price.  
H.E.R.O Books, 58 Portland Road, HOVE, East Sussex, BN3 3DL  
Tel: 01273 775560  
Email: [xdz79@dial.pipex.com](mailto:xdz79@dial.pipex.com)

#### **Taking Children Seriously**

TCS represents a profound criticism of prevailing theories of education and parenting, and provides a positive alternative. TCS is about how to bring up children in such a way that their learning is motivated entirely by their own interests, and not by externally imposed incentives or penalties. Taking Children Seriously, the journal, is essential reading for anyone interested in improving their relationship with their children, and for anyone concerned about their children's education.

**To subscribe**, send a cheque (payable to TCS) for £8 for 4 issues or £15 for 8 issues to TCS, 46 Latimer Grange, Latimer Road, Oxford OX3 7PH, UK  
Telephone: 01865 761817  
Email: [SL@enterprise.net](mailto:SL@enterprise.net)

#### **THE NON-STOP READER CAN TEACH CHILDREN TO READ WITHIN WEEKS**

Detailed instructions  
Never a moment's boredom  
Wonderful illustrations  
Systematically graded  
Scientifically up to date

#### **SEE REVIEW IN AUGUST EDITION**

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Oxford OX2 7AU  
Tel: (01865) 554953 Fax: (01865) 553443  
e-mail: [100532.1550@compuserve.com](mailto:100532.1550@compuserve.com)

#### **NEWSLETTER FOR JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES WHO HOME EDUCATE THEIR CHILDREN**

For a sample copy, please send four 20p stamps and your address to:  
Louise English  
41 Queens Road  
Horley  
Surrey RH6 7AH

**ESPERANTO: a master key**

- to unlock the languages of the world!

**"Urso-Kurso"**

a colourful four-part, tutor supported, correspondence course, interesting and attractive for young learners; includes games, puzzles, activities.

Designed to help children develop vital skills needed for learning foreign languages.

Free Information Pack: Esperanto Teachers' Association (reg. Charity no. 268847) 1 Regent Avenue, Skipton, BD23 1AZ

Discover other languages, other cultures!

**Little Arthur Independent**

A small school on the beautiful island of St Martin's specialising in ecological, agricultural and craft activities for children aged 7 - 17. One-month introductory courses in shoemaking, conservation and blacksmithing skills. Also tutoring for IGCSE Maths, English, French, Accounting, History, Agriculture and Natural Economy. One year IGCSE Agriculture course, suitable for distance learners, also available with one month fieldwork and course work studies on St Martin's. For details: Little Arthur Independent, St Martin's Isles of Scilly, Cornwall.

The **JSTSSEWINGBOOKLETS** and various **CORRESPONDENCESEWING COURSES** are for students of any age from beginner to advanced. **WITH JSTS DISTANCE IS NEVER A PROBLEM!!**

Contact:

Just Sew Tuition Service, Dept EO,  
8 Woodstock Rd, London NW11 8ER,  
Tel: 0181 731 9011 Fax: 0181 731 8935  
Web: [www.mistral.co.uk/justsew](http://www.mistral.co.uk/justsew)

**WISE OWL**

**EDUCATIONALSOFTWARE**

PO Box 334 Abingdon OX14 2YB

Telephone 01235 - 529808

email [wiseowlsw@aol.com](mailto:wiseowlsw@aol.com)

The only UK children's shareware library, established 1991. Specialising in educational programs and games (DOS, Windows 3.1 & 95) for all PCs (XTs to Pentiums). 800 titles for 2-16+ years. 3\_ & 5\_ media. Free newsletter & advice.

**Latest Titles:**  Atoms Symbols & Equations (KS3/4) £3  Amiglobe World Atlas £6  Childrens Logic Games £3  Teaching Tiles £3  Family Fun for Windows £3  Roxie's Reading Fish £3  PC Blox Virtual Bricks £3  Yet more (23) Paper Dolls £3  Primary Learning £9

< <http://members.aol.com/wiseowlsw/index.html>

**To Place an Advert:** Advertising in the newsletter is free, but if you are running a business or hoping to profit from your advert, please send an appropriate donation. Cheques should be made payable to "Education Otherwise".

Remember that EO is run entirely by volunteers and has no income except members' subscriptions. Adverts should be limited to 50 words and sent (with any donation) to the editor of the next issues.

Advertisers who wish to discuss larger ads should contact the newsletter co-ordinator. Please note we no longer accept large adverts.

**Chair: Eleanor Stapleton**  
63 Sweet Briar Grove, Edmonton,  
London N99LU Tel: 0181 8884 1368

**Vice Chair: vacant**

**General Secretary: Lucy Charlton,**  
Church Lane Cottages, Newton Harcourt,  
Leics, LE8 0FT Tel: 0116 2592118

**Treasurer: Priscilla Park-Weir,**  
212 Gordon Avenue, Camberley, Surrey,  
GU15 2NT Tel: 01276 22735

**Publicity Contacts:**  
**Anita Jamal:** 01904 645659  
**Beverley Young:** 01772 492245

**Newsletter Coordinator: Sue Hutchin,**  
Oakwood, Snoad Hill, Bethersden, Ashford,  
Kent TN26 3ED Tel/fax: 01233 820008

**Coordinators' Secretary: Isobel Bogucki,**  
20 Rusper Road, Horsham, West Sussex,  
RH12 4BD Tel: 01403 261178.

**Single Parent Family Contact: Sarah Martin,**  
Rose Cottage, Three Holes Bridge, Wisbech,  
Norfolk, PE14 9JR Tel: 01945 772336.

**Special Needs: vacant**

**Research Contact:**  
**Catrina Morrison:** 93, Blacklock  
Crescent, Dundee. Tel: 01382 864930

**Database Secretary: Janet Wilkinson**  
58 Brindley Close, Wembley, London HA0 1BS  
Tel 0181 998 3252  
*(subscription renewals, address changes,  
newsletter mailing, membership cards etc)*

**School Phobia: Geraldine Adams**  
01631 565551

**GCSE Contact: Wendy Plested**  
Tel 01865 514973

**College Contact: vacant**

**Enquiries Secretaries Coordinator:**  
**Eileen Wilson,** 39 Tatenhill Lane, Branston,  
Burton-on-Trent, DE14 3EZ  
Tel: 01283 532547

**Membership Secretaries Coordinator:**  
**Pam Bellinger:** The Wallingford Arms, 237  
Broadway, Didcote OX11 8QJ 01235 814999

**EO Stalls: Lucy Charlton,** Church Lane  
Cottages, Newton Harcourt, Leics  
LE8 0FT Tel 0116 2592118

**Stationery: Pam Bellinger**  
The Wallingford Arms, 237 Broadway,  
Didcote, OX 11 8QJ 01235 814999  
*EO stationery, re-use labels (£2.50 per 100)  
leaflets, posters, membership forms, car  
stickers and are available from; (Donations  
towards postage & printing welcomed)*

**Publications: Chris Harper**  
For details of EO publications, information  
leaflets and back issues of newsletters, send a  
SAE to; Badgers Holt, Birchwood, Storrige,  
Malvern, Worcs. WR13 5HA ( 01886 884740)  
*If you have had your publications list for a  
while, ring Chris to check on the availability of  
the items you want before ordering.*

#### **Council Members**

*If you have a problem, contact your nearest  
council member;*

**Christine Adey** (Dorset)  
**Andy Archer** (Leics)  
**Jude Ashley-Walker** (Isle of Wight)  
**Pam Bellinger** (Oxon)  
**Isobel Bogucki** (Sussex West)  
**Lucy Charlton** (Leics)  
**Jill Fisher** (Leics)  
**Val Gommon** (Bucks)  
**Sue Hutchin** (Kent)  
**Priscilla Park-Weir** (Surrey)  
**Gary Podmore** (Yorks)  
**Eleanor Stapleton** (London-North)  
**Anne Wade** (London Middx)  
**Bruce Wallace** (Highlands)  
**Janet Wilkinson** (Middex)  
**Beverley Young** (Lancs)

# education otherwise

Education Otherwise is a membership organisation which provides support and information for families whose children are being educated outside school, and for those who wish to uphold the freedom of families to take proper responsibility for the education of their children.

Our principal aims are to:

- encourage learning outside the school system;
- reaffirm that parents have the primary responsibility for their children's education and that they have the right to exercise this responsibility by educating them out of school;
- establish the primary right of children to have full consideration given to their wishes and feelings about their education.

For further information send an A5 s.a.e. to:

P.O. BOX 7420  
LONDON N9 9SG

HELPLINE 0891 518303

(calls charged at 50p per minute at all times. Recorded message,  
average call length; 1- 2 minutes)

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<[e\\_o@netlink.co.uk](mailto:e_o@netlink.co.uk)>

