

education otherwise



June 2000

No. 134

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LOCAL NEWS (vacant)

HOME EDUCATION NEWS

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(For information about volunteering for any
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Christine Adey)

Please include your name, address and phone number and mark material 'for publication'.

Contributions are more likely to be included if they are concise.

DEADLINE FOR THE AUGUST ISSUE IS 1ST JULY 2000

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From the Editors...

At last, the June Newsletter! An important feature of this issue is the excellent articles on the Summerhill victory that is potentially good news for us all, in recognising that we retain the freedom to choose a style of education that best suits our children's needs. The following message has been sent by the head of the school, Zoe Readhead:

A huge thanks to EO for all the support we received during our campaign. It was great to find a whole group waiting for us outside Downing Street on the day that we presented our letters to Number 10. Obviously hardened campaigners, you all came complete with whistles and banners and showed us just how it should be done! It was great fun and much appreciated.

I hope that what Summerhill has achieved will be of direct help to some of you. Now we are looking forward to a good summer with a bit of that 'idleness' that Ofsted has accused us of!

Best wishes and thanks from Zoe and Summerhill.

Summerhill incurred massive legal costs in order to fight their case. Should anyone wish to send a donation towards these costs to the school, the address is: Summerhill School, Leiston, Suffolk. IP16 4HY

Many younger members have contributed to this issue's Special Section, which is very refreshing, and they continue to do so in the excellent Book Reviews and Resources. Sarah Guthrie has researched articles from the eighties about Maths this month. Hopefully, this will inspire contributions for the next Special Section, which is on Maths! Don't forget to volunteer for a turn at editing this section.

Home Education News brings more information about how authorities abroad affect education out of school: look out for the US Senate's affirmation of homeschooling. There is still time to sign up for an EO camp or two and, on the subject of signing up, there are EO Groups that would welcome input from anyone willing to help. Check for these in EO Business.

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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT:
USING THE LOCAL
COMMUNITY AS A
LEARNING RESOURCE

When I first started home-education 15 years ago I was under the impression that I had to sit my child down, at a desk, from 9a.m. - 3p.m.; that I must have a time table and that to go out during school hours was unacceptable. My first, initial contact with the LEA did not dispel this myth.

I think it is evident from the range of community activities that members of our local EO group are involved in that, far from being unacceptable to go out, it enhances education to make use of the local community and offers our children (and parents) unique opportunities.

Some of the opportunities that came up were:

- Working as a volunteer in the local playgroup
- Acting as a guide around museums/places of interest

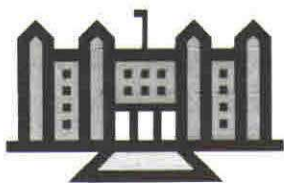
- Helping out with community events
- St. John's Ambulance service volunteer
- Teaching computer courses
- Tennis coaching
- Gardening
- Working alongside adults in their workplace
- Youth organisations
- Adult education classes and workshops
- WI Market
- Scrap stores
- Dog walking 'business'

The possibilities are endless, particularly as children get older. Limited only by your child's interests and willingness to 'own up' to being home-educated. We have always found people more than willing to accommodate an interested, motivated child.

The following articles have been written by members of the Suffolk EO group:

I have been involved in many community activities, such as:

Kentwell Hall



Which is a Tudor re-creation in Long Melford, Suffolk. I have spent some time each year during the past 8 years teaching school parties and visitors to the manor Tudor skills through the character of a Tudor. This obviously is a very good learning experience, not only in speaking to groups but in learning traditional skills from my friends such as bee-keeping, archery and fletching. In addition, I have to speak Tudor English, made my own costumes and learn to live for three weeks, every summer, completely out of the 21st Century way of living

Dance Camp East

I've been involved in the dance camp community for several years, helping to foster a sense of community on the field in North Norfolk through building and organising a big summer camp every year and also building several large structures on the field e.g. a shower block, a sauna, a late night café, a round house made of straw bales and a wood henge made from pieces of 5000 year old bog oak. Last year I joined the organising committee for dance camp and have been attending meetings there once a month since last August.

ASDAN

I have just completed my bronze award portfolio for this scheme, for which I am registered as an external student with Norwich City College. This scheme is excellent for home education as it allows you to gain accreditation for the sort of things we do anyway, although it does encourage

you to use your community to gain knowledge. For example, I did an Open University study pack on East Anglian geology and environment and did several field trips for this. I have also done a day's work experience at a local web design firm, talked to community members about their religious views and played squash regularly at our local(ish) Sports Centre.

Fair on the Green 2000

I am helping to organise a Fair to take place in Diss in June. This will be the conclusion of a three week-long celebration of the millennium involving all aspects of the community in Diss. We will have stalls from the whole community i.e. local shops and businesses, craftspeople and healers. My role in this will be helping as site crew doing jobs like stall allocation, parking, site layout etc.

Simon Roe, (15) Diss, Norfolk

I first got interested in computers when we acquired our first Spectrum and Amstrad back in the eighties. Later on we got given a BBC computer by a friend and I got to play with a few laptops from Dad's work. This got me going and I started getting more and more interested in computers and in October 1997 I finally managed to persuade Mum to buy a computer.



After about a month the hard drive broke down and we took it to the newly opened computer shop in Eye. A one-man business run by someone called Charles. I spent three days down at the shop helping him and observing the expert. When he finished Charles just happened to mention he could do with help in the

shop. I took him up on this and within a few weeks I was going down every Saturday morning and being taught how software and hardware works and how to repair it.

Later on I began to go down for a full day and did more varied things like testing second hand components and helping build new computers. I now have a paid Saturday job with him building and repairing computers and curing customer's problems. This job now looks set to expand into the week as the business is prospering. Not bad for something that started off as a voluntary job learning the ropes.

*Philip White (16) Eye,
Suffolk*

Every Monday I help out at the Natural Foodstore in Diss for a few hours. They sell all kinds of wholefoods. Some of the things I do include weighing out food, bagging up, serving people, stocking shelves etc. It is

kind of a tradition in my family because two of my sisters worked there in the past quite a lot, so now it's been handed down to me. I don't get paid because I'm under fourteen, but I often get free food and stuff. I enjoy meeting new people through serving, and it's just a really nice atmosphere. While we're working we have cups of tea and cake with the radio on. I think I learn a lot about food, nutrition and healthcare because you get all sorts of people with health problems so you get more knowledgeable about certain medicines and remedies.

I hope I continue working there for quite a while.

*Nina Guthrie (13)
Thrandeston, Suffolk*

I mainly became involved in doing voluntary work in the community for my Duke of Edinburgh's award. This started with the British Red Cross and has gone from there.



I began work with the Red Cross some four years ago helping at the charity shop and also coming along to outings to help out. The Red Cross centre is also home to the Eye old peoples' club, this ensured that I was always kept busy ferrying refreshments around the place and helping entertain the members! The shop was a major source of work as every time I turned up there were at least three full bin liners to be sorted out and put on sale. The club outings and events were very enjoyable to attend, even though I was put on behind the scenes duties! During my time with the organisation we only went on one trip, to Southwold where I was put into service pushing the old people around in their wheelchairs.

After a relaxing stroll along the seafront, where I resisted the temptation to push anyone in!! we retired for fish and chips, or in my case just chips due to vegetarianism.



I also went along to the Red Cross garden party where I performed the unglamorous

but vital role of doing the washing up and serving the teas. All said I found the Red Cross an enjoyable organisation to work for but I moved on after about a year as I felt it wasn't what I wanted long-term.

After leaving the Red Cross I had a period of inactivity before volunteering at Eye library.



Originally this started up as just a pre-school storytelling session I used to run but, over time, my duties have expanded and the storytelling is sadly no longer operational. I used to run weekly storytelling sessions every Wednesday which I found very fulfilling as I have always liked working with children but as children grew up and moved on no-one else came to fill the gaps and so, after several months with no attendance, we decided to close it down.

By this time I was (and still am) doing many of the more basic functions around the library such as shelving the books and finding any that had been requested from

other libraries, jobs which have become a routine for me. This voluntary work at the library has provided invaluable experience for my hoped for career in historical research. Recently I have found a new niche within the library, helping with the newly installed information technology. People often come to me for 'expert' aid on the subject! There is also something to look forward to each summer when the children's reading game comes around. While it means a massive increase in workload over the six weeks of the summer holiday I really enjoy it and very little would make me miss it.

I also help with the Scout group when I have the time. As a member of the local Venture unit I often help plan events and activities for the younger sections of the movement, particularly the Scouts. This usually involves setting up their camps and district hikes. Our involvement stretches

to planning the route and also running the activity bases along the way. This is always an amusing day out, although sadly we aren't allowed to be too cruel! Camps are rather less fun as we tend to be relegated to the post of 'slave labourer' and do all the real work so the Scouts can get on with enjoying themselves. I have been called upon to help at Beavers in the past as, unfortunately, my father is the Beaver leader and excuses have no effect on him (he's also immune to begging, snivelling and grovelling!!). This involves me with cleaning up the mess the little devils have left behind after their meetings. Fundraising events are another favourite of the group and, needless to say, I get roped into these as well. Fortunately I get away with just supervising the younger members who do all the work behind the stalls (heh heh heh).

Generally I find my voluntary work in the

community to be a rewarding experience and I recommend it to anyone who might be interested. So go on give it a try, you'll find it pays off in the end.

*Adrian White age 18, 2
Pretoria Villas, Eye Road,
Brome, Suffolk, IP23 8AL*



I go and help at Hawkins Farm Riding Stables each Saturday. I go down from about lunch time, and come back around 4 o'clock. I bring horses in to get ready for lessons, clean out stables, and sometimes help by leading horses in lessons when the children can't move the horses themselves. Most of the horses there are lovely, and the adults are nice too. There are quite a few children who

help there as well, so that's quite nice.

Over Easter I helped with the annual Easter Egg Hunt.



This is great fun. I had to lead the little children round looking for clues to, eventually, lead to a cache of eggs. I got to share the eggs for helping!

I really like helping there and I hope I will carry on helping for quite a while.

Elizabeth White (12) Brome, Suffolk

P.S. Elizabeth has just started to help at the WI Market, selling cakes, biscuits and savouries. She is hoping to earn enough money to pay for her Guide camp in the summer.

Although there are a lot of regulations to follow she is thoroughly enjoying it. Everyone has made her very welcome and after the first few members had asked her why she wasn't at school (!) they have been really supportive.

She has always done a lot of cooking and it nice for her to get a tangible reward for it. If our local school is anything to go by ('cookery' lessons consisting of designing packaging, using frozen pastry and packet mixes!!), it is also a skill that would only be learnt at home. It is also giving her the opportunity to interact with others, which perhaps, leads on to the other question that is always on the hot list when you tell people that you home-educate
SOCIALISATION.

".....Home-schooling families actually create a much higher quality of social life in their practice of family-centred education in three ways. First of all they use the home as a springboard

into the community using libraries, museums, places of interest in both town and country. In the process they rub shoulders with people of all ages.....Secondly, they locate and join groups such as Scouts, Guides, and Woodcraft Folk, as well as groups or classes in judo, swimming and other sports, or natural history and other pursuits. Thirdly, they seek out other home-schooling families and do things in co-operation."

Quotes taken from 'A superstition called socialisation', Educational Heretics website)

Our Community

We live in a small village just east of Ipswich; as such our immediate community is very limited, it consists a village shop-cum-post office, a church, chapel and a pub. I'll let you decide for yourselves, which is most important! Slightly further a

field we access swimming pools, libraries, leisure centres, theatres and museums. All of these we use as much as possible. The Ipswich Museum recently held an exhibition on the lunar landings and had many exhibits from NASA. We try to visit our local Fort once a year to see how much restoration work has been completed since our last trip. Our son Sam has Asperger's Syndrome and has joined in a "Sailing for the disabled" scheme. He enjoys this very much and hopes it will go towards another badge for Cubs.



My boys are 6 and 8 and neither have been to school. We use a variety of community resources.

They have both attended a Karate class in the past, one goes to Gymnastics, the other is waiting for a trampolining place to become available. All these are through our local Sports Centre. They have done intensive swimming courses at a nearby pool a few times. On occasions a group of us go rollerskating, which is enjoyed by all, but can be quite expensive as we normally spend 4-5 hours there and the children go to Activity World as well as skate. Group trips have also taken advantage of special exhibitions at local museums and local historical sites.



Another great resource is Suffolk Wildlife Trusts Foxburrow Farm. Once a month for 9 months a group spends the day at the farm learning about ecology, biology and conservation. It is open to children between

the ages of 5 and 12. Well worth a try if you are in the area or see if you can set something up with a Wildlife Trust near you.

Our council also has an education budget on the wildlife and leisure sites it manages and we got them to do a free day's pond dipping for us once. Often, during the school holidays, places run activity days and, sometimes, we have tried these but we tend to be so busy these days within the local HE group that it is difficult to fit these in or even feel the need to!

We also use shops and parks and tearooms as places to try out skills that you don't or can't use at home!

When we are out and about we always tell people we HE if the subject comes up (as it so often does) so not only do the children expand their knowledge but they themselves expand the knowledge of people they meet.

wendy.knight@dial.pipex.com

Book Reviews and Resources

A Visitor's Guide to Ancient Rome

This is one of the Usborne Timetour's Series. It has recently won the *Times Educational Supplement Senior Information Book Award*. It is a lovely book, a history book disguised as a visitor's guide. I like books that are in this style for learning; in the form of newspaper or tourist's guide book. There are some interesting pictures: some are similar to cartoons, some are more realistic and some are photos. It has five chapters and an introduction. The chapters are on tourist information; site-seeing, trips out of Rome and background. One particular fact I learnt from this book was that fires and stoves were illegal in Ancient Rome because of the wooden floors. At the front of the book there is an interesting map, with main sites marked. It is very good for seeing what ancient Rome looked like. Throughout the book there are some little blue boxes called top tips for tourists. They contain some very interesting facts about Romans and ancient Rome. For example, the island in the middle of the Tiber has been landscaped to look like a boat. On the whole this is a very good, informative and well written book.

Emma Whitehall (9)

£8.99 available from most book shops. Published by Usborne Publishing, Usborne House, 83-85 Saffron Hill, London EC1N 8RT. Tel 020 7430 2800.

The Number File by Adrian Jenkins

This book runs through a variety of the more interesting mathematical phenomena. Having said this it is probably of most interest to those who have some fascination with maths. A lot of the material in this book is fairly advanced, I am studying maths at A-level and I have not covered all of it. Don't let this put you off however, as the book explains it all very well with an easy and accessible style. The tables and examples contained here could easily form the basis of intriguing maths puzzles. This is an excellent starter to get people into mathematics. After you've read it you'll find yourself wanting to know more and who knows, maybe you'll be the next maths genius!!

Adrian White (17)

£3.95 from Tarquin Publications, Stradbroke, Diss, Norfolk IP21 5JP. Tel 01379 384 218. Tarquin have a really good range of innovative books which are excellent value. Visit the web site at www.tarquin-books.demon.co.uk

Little Bear's Grandad by Nigel Gray

This story is about a young bear and his lovely relationship with his grandad who becomes ill, then dies. Hazel asked me to read it twice. She said it was good that the book showed happy times as well as sad but decided that she didn't like it much. Kim wasn't impressed either. The illustrations are bright but very

ordinary. We would all have preferred the characters to be human rather than bears, particularly in a story trying to deal with this human situation and emotions.

Sally, Hazel (8) and Kim (4) Jarvis

Little Tiger Press, PO Box 19, Huntingdon, Cambridge PE19 3JF (01480 212666) £8.88 ISBN 1 85430 6367 hardback

It's Science! The Five Senses by Sally Hewitt

Primary science books fill the shelves of our local libraries so it would take something very special to tempt us to buy outright such a text. *The Five Senses* is clearly written, well laid out and concise with illustrations in abundance. A particularly good feature is the inclusion of "Think about it", "Try it out" and "Look again" boxes. These encourage the reader to interact with the book rather than read/be read to. Naturally sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste are all explained, but additional sections broaden out the learning to give practical examples of everyday usage of the senses. Tricia, aged 7 at the time, felt it was a good book and particularly enjoyed the experiments, which required adult assistance in most cases. Whilst all this makes *The Five Senses* a good teaching aid it does not set it above the rest enough to warrant the hefty price tag. Look out for this book when it reaches your local library (but keep the tenner safely stashed in your purse or wallet!).

Tim & Tricia (8) Onions

Published by Franklin Watts (020 7739 2929), £9.99 ISBN 0-7496-3068-X Age range 5-9, 30 pages

Oxford GCSE Mathematics CD-Rom

This CD-ROM covers every maths topic by all the exam boards and asks a score of questions to help you revise as best as possible. It uses Internet Explorer 5 to run (included on disk) and so uses a familiar interface making it much easier to use. The look of the guide is customisable - you can alter the colour and pattern of the borders and the background to suit your tastes. There are different ways to start using the program. One way is to take a long test of about 50 questions and let the program work out your weak areas and devise a timetable to suit. Another way is to write out your own calendar putting in days off and breaks, or you can just start revising on the test questions straight away. This seems better than other revision guide I have used as this one is written by examiners and covers far more subjects with a lot more questions. I wish I had had it to help with my revision last year!

Philip White (16)

Available at £19.99 from any good software retailers. The Learning Company do a wide range of educational software. Visit its web site at www.learning.co.uk

Viewpoints: Media Power by Alison Cooper

This book asks questions about issues related to the media. For example: 'is it necessary to show shocking pictures of war and famine?' and 'when does media interest become an invasion of privacy?' Each topic covers a two-page spread and contains contemporary quotations offering the two sides of the argument. You are left to make up your own mind about how you feel about the issues. This is a good starter for discussion. My 10 year old found it quite difficult to grasp some of the issues discussed and my 16 year old felt that it did not go into depth and was too superficial for him. I would, therefore, say that it is a book to share with a child who is interested in how information is being put across and to offer the other side to them. This is a book to dip into when the time is right, for you and your child. There are other books in the series covering issues such as smoking, punishment, drugs and human rights. This book gives the pluses and minuses around the issues the media is involved in. The book gave a balanced argument.

Sue, Adrian (17) and Philip (16) White

Published by Franklin Watts (020 7739 2929), £9.99

Eco Crash by Terrance Dicks

Terrance Dicks was a writer for the much missed 'Doctor Who' series which my older kids loved, hiding behind the sofa during the scarier bits, and we grown ups enjoyed for its wobbly sets, bad acting, and above all, the implausible story lines. Mr Dicks hasn't moved far since then. As a children's writer, I always agonise over whether a story line is believable and the characters convincing. Terrance ain't motivated by such trifles. My eldest son read it in an hour and is disinclined to continue the saga. Yes, this is part of an ongoing series. The populist story lines, the coincidences which will tax even the most generous hearted child, the sheer impossibility of some of the action leaves this reviewer gasping. Terrance Dicks can write, let's not quibble about that, but original (sorry Terrance) he ain't. Gerry O'Donnell

and

The Easter Island Incident by Terrance Dicks

When the statues on Easter Island start to move and to chase and even kill people this needs investigating. This book is suitable for children aged 10+. I think it is aimed more at boys than girls, because of the action, suspense and gory bits in it. If you are interested in archaeology and spooky goings on, then this book would appeal to you.

Laura Goldsworth (12)

Both above titles (£5.99 and £4.99 respectively, paperback) from Piccadilly Press, 5 Castle Road, London NW1 8PR. Tel 020 7267 4492.

Nickelodeon BrainBender Puzzles & Activities, Windows 95/98 CD-Rom (age 8 and up)

The link with "educational" software is tenuous on this CD-Rom, as is the link to Nickelodeon. It contains a set of games and activities split into two types; logical and creative (which it refers to as left and right brain for obvious reasons). On the logical left brain are the problem-solving games. However, given that the CD-Rom is aimed at 8 year olds and over, none of its games proved any challenge for Tricia, who turned 8 at about the same time as we received the review copy. The only frustrating challenge for her was not being able to better her best time of 4 seconds finding the route through the maze game! On the creative right brain are activities such as Dancing Toons where you choreograph a cartoon character's steps, and ToonDraw where you are shown how to draw a cartoon character. The fascination with these were shortlived in our household though, once the novelty had worn off. Some of the activities can be saved and sent, via e-mail, to friends who also have BrainBender on their PC. This also allows things created within the program to be used by standard PC graphics software. Although the accompanying leaflet has the English spelling of "favourite" we spotted the American version on the screen (cue discussion on language differences). And that tenuous link to Nickelodeon? All the activities available can be "customised" to use music, backdrops and characters from one of a number of Nickelodeon cartoons (Rugrats is included, of course).

Tim, Tricia (8) & Sue Onions

Available at £24.99 from any good software retailers. The Learning Company do a wide range of educational software. Visit its web site at www.learning.co.uk

Little Turtle and the Song of the Sea by Sheridan Cain

This book for young children tells the story of one baby turtle's struggles, from its egg to the sea. Hazel and Kim loved it, the painted illustrations are perfect, the text is simple, enjoyable to read and poetic. Hazel's only comment is that all the animals are male, something I'm sensitive to too - we find mainly male animals and people as the central and only characters in children's books. I would buy it for any under 5 as a gift or possibly for older children.

Sally, Hazel (8) and Kim (4) Jarvis

Little Tiger Press £8.88 ISBN 1 85430 6197 hardback

Sesame Street - Toddlers CD (2 set)

This first looked to be an interesting choice for a CD as Sesame Street lends itself to multimedia and the CD promised an interesting variety of activities and interaction. However, after a mere 20 minutes of playtime our resident expert demanded that we re-load her previous favourite from Dorling Kindersley. It transpired that she not only had explored everything that she could find, but she was not impressed by the rather strange games. The broken speech clips that were joined together and were often

different voices made the characters totally unbelievable. Worst of all Rachel was scared by going into Big Birds room for the first time and refused to go back there again! From an adult perspective the graphics were poor, the animation almost amateurish and presentation rather below par, compared with DK and other titles. The 2nd CD was really just a simple print programme.

Dave Shenton & Rachel (3)

Available at £24.99 from any good software retailers. The Learning Company do a wide range of educational software. Visit its web site at www.learning.co.uk

Learnfree Web Site www.learnfree.co

This is described as the 'essential' guide to education on the Internet. It is rather school orientated providing curriculum-related home learning materials across all subjects. It covers key educational issues and links parents throughout the country via the home computer. Claimed to access the very best of educational resources from around the world!

TITLES RECOMMENDED BY MEMBERS

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

This book is about a very mean man called Scrooge. He is haunted by three spirits who try to make his life better for him. In the end they succeed. The most frightening bit is when Scrooge hears a strange noise which turns out to be a ghost. I found this exciting. The most interesting part was the flashback when the ghost of Christmas Past shows him his life before. This book came with a tape which I liked listening to. I think anybody over 6 would like this story.

Kit Freisleben (6)

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

I like this book because its got holes in the food at the end and when the caterpillar turns into a butterfly it's good.

Jem Freisleben (5)

Holes by Louis Sachar

I picked this book up because of the lovely lizard on the cover (yellow spotted and highly poisonous), and it turns out they do play a very small but crucial role in the story. Stanley, the hero, is an overweight adolescent who has been caught out in some misdemeanour, and given the choice between prison and 'Camp Green Lake'; he chooses the latter. 'Bad' boys are sent there to dig holes, five foot wide by five foot deep, every day to 'build character' (hence the title of the book). It is a brutal and harsh place, 95 degrees in the shade, except the only shade is owned by the elusive and enigmatic Warden. As the story of Stanley and the other boys in his team develops, it is interspersed with Stanley's family history, mainly his 'no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather'. Friendships grow, battles fought and alliances forged between the boys, but all is not quite what it

seems and before long they are all digging a big hole looking for something 'interesting' for the Warden. A fascinating story, cruel and unpleasant in places, with intriguing twists and turns, not really much action and you really have to pay attention to the detail as nothing is put there by accident. I loved the nicknames - some strange place where you wear the name 'Armpit' with pride. Martine Archer
Published by Bloomsbury, ISBN 0 7475 4648 7

Lego Crazy Action Contraptions

This is a fantastic book which comes complete with 60 special Lego Technic pieces showing in clear, step-by-step photos how to make 10 contraptions (5 of which need standard Lego pieces to complete), ranging from skittle tops, rubber band powered racer, balloon powered car, ping-pong popper, coat hanger (tightrope) daredevil and a trapdoor cable car parachute machine. It is a real imagination firer, especially if you're a mum like me who doesn't have a clue when it comes to Lego! It is aimed at 7 year olds but my 3 year old had a great time helping find the correct bits and fixing them on. My personal favourite was the Kentucky Do-Nothing, but you'll have to get the book to find out about that one! A brilliant book for teaching elements of science to those kids who would rather be playing with their Lego than doing academic work. Beverley Addams
Around £14 ISBN 1 57504 157 from Books for Children or HI Marketing Ltd, 38 Carver Road, London SE24 9LT

The Grammar Handbook 1

by Sara Wernham and Sue Lloyd

Published in March, this continues the excellent Jolly Phonics reading scheme. It is a comprehensive programme for teaching grammar, punctuation and spelling. As with the Jolly Phonics scheme it uses fun actions to help children learn the parts of speech and to reinforce their knowledge of letter sounds. *The Grammar Handbook* was written as a teacher's manual but it can be easily adapted by the home educator. It is easily photocopied so could be shared by several families. It is very clear and well laid out. An excellent resource to assist with the teaching of grammar and spelling.

Sally and Keith (6) Hall

£19.00 from Jolly Learning Ltd, Tailours House, High Road, Chigwell, Essex IG7 6DL. Tel 020 8501 0405

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Home Education News

HOME EDUCATION ABROAD

In last month's newsletter Jennifer Fandard, member of the French home-educators' support group 'Les enfants d'abord' wrote about how new legislation is reinforcing government inspections of homeschooling families in France. As is the case currently in Ireland, the change in the law has made many fear that freedom of education in their country is steadily being eroded. So how do other home-educators around the world view the legal constraints placed upon them? In this newsletter we will look more closely at the situation of two home educators from very different parts of the world and their contrasting attitudes to how the law affects them.

For up-to-date information on the situation in France (articles in French and English) see the website: www.multimania.com/possible

News and discussion of the situation in Ireland can be found at the website of the Irish lobby group Home Education network: www.ie.embnet.org/hen

For general information about home-educating worldwide, see Amanda Petrie's excellent website 'International Home Education' at: www.worldzone.net/lifestyles/homeeducation

Dr Petrie already has extensive and well researched sections on the law, local support groups and other information affecting home educators in Europe and all around the world. She is looking for more information about home education in countries where the smaller numbers of home educators or the thornier legal implications make details harder to obtain. See this website also for details of the conference 'Education for Social Democracies' to be held in London in July, and to read the full text of longer papers on subjects such as 'Home Education and the Law' and 'Homeschooling and the Redefinition of Citizenship'.

New Zealand

New Zealand is a country with a strong tradition of home education and many support groups to prove it. The Homeschooling Federation of

New Zealand's role is to improve the legal environment for homeschooling families there. It has a very informative and well written website at www.homeschooling.org.nz, which features among other articles a dissection of the law as it affects homeschoolers and the importance of asserting that home education is, in many cases, not meant to be a pale imitation of what goes on in schools. They point out that 'being taught' is not the same as "attending"; and that 'being taught' is not the same as "learning"; and that 'teaching quality is not the same as teaching programmes', among other points useful for all home educators to remember if faced with unsympathetic inspectors.

Lennie Harrison is one home-educator who in her own words is living the 'good life' on 10 acres outside a small New Zealand village with her husband and three children. She sent me this report on the organization she helps to run and how the law affects New Zealand families. Perhaps our education authorities could take note of the idea of homeschooling families being paid a modest sum for their hard work...

The National Council of Home Educators NZ is an incorporated society set up specifically to encourage, promote, inform and advance the cause of home education in New Zealand at a national level. Membership to the National Council is for individuals, but we also encourage Support Groups to become affiliated. Individuals receive a discount if their Support Group is affiliated. They do not promote any particular philosophy of home education. They merely adhere to the right to home educate and to the belief that the responsibility of educating our children rests with the parents. Neither do they proclaim to represent anyone. Assist, support, inform and promote, but not represent, unless someone specifically request that they do so. They keep members and Support Groups informed of the latest developments. They also consult with members and Support Groups for opinions and comments in regards to specific issues. As an organisation they are developing discussion papers for general

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comment, and ultimately, to discuss these matters with Government. The danger for home educators is that because we are so diverse in our beliefs and philosophies, there is little national cohesive unity for some of the basic precepts, the foremost being the right to home educate. We all agree with it and wish to push it further, but all too often we are isolated and have to confront the 'System' on our own. If New Zealand is to follow, for example, Australia, we can expect greater attacks on the freedoms we currently enjoy. Unless we are well informed and well organised we could be in danger of losing what rights we already have. Belonging to the National council enables anyone to join with others from throughout New Zealand in addressing existing standards and conditions and promoting better ones at a national level. Anyone's participation and input is valued. The National Council has a close working relationship with both HENA (Home Educators Network of Aotearoa = Maori for New Zealand) and the HEF (Home Education Foundation - a Christian nationwide organisation). Both are well established, prominent national groups. What this implies is that home educators throughout New Zealand are communicating more and more with one another and a degree of cohesiveness is developing despite the intense individuality we all have. This can only be of benefit to Home Educators generally.

My local group is Canterbury Home Educators, Canterbury being a province in the South Island of New Zealand. We are incorporated and engage in a range of support activities, like Information evenings. These are held monthly to address the needs and questions of people who want to know more about home education, are on the point of starting, have just started etc. Home Educators' Library, housed in someone's spare room, is a much frequented place. We have recently acquired a photocopier of our very own! Yahoo. Particularly the 'h.e. parenthelp books' are extremely popular. Support Meetings, once a

term, concentrate on a topic, like Unit Studies, How to Teach Research Skills, Living Books, Educational Games etc. Newsletter, once a term. Play- and activity groups, cater for all ages. Some have an organised structure, others are 'as you find them'. Starter Packs. For a small donation these are available at Info meetings and sent out to enquirers. We also organise all kinds of happenings, like Concert, Camp, Educational visits, Sports, Short courses etc.

The law in NZ requires of parents that their children receive an education between the ages of 6 and 16. Parents may fulfill this requirement by enrolling their children in a state registered school, or they may ask the Ministry of Education for exemption from this enrolment. The MoE will grant this exemption provided that they 'are and remain satisfied that we teach our children as regularly and as well as in a registered school'. This is all that the law requires. In practice, at the moment, this means that you have to apply to the MoE for an exemption, which is a major bit of homework. You must convince MoE that you will teach as regularly and as well etc. Every 6 months you are required to sign a statutory declaration, in front of a JP, to say that you have been homeschooling over the last six months. This will result in a payment of Supervisory Allowance. The yearly entitlement at present is \$743 for the 1st child, decreasing to about \$320 for the 4th and every subsequent child. This is in line with what parents of National Correspondence School children are paid. The Education Review Office will be asked by MoE to review our programme and teaching methods. In practice they also concentrate on our children's learning outcomes. These reviews cause a good amount of controversy and anxiety, but are also often seen as positive. Since last year I have started a Home Education Consultancy. I offer help in 5 areas: - Help with application of exemption to MoE, - Preparation for ERO review, - home education Beginners'

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seminars, - mediation in dealing with government agencies, - mentoring of home educating parents. I have not mentored parents yet (not in person, I have on the phone). In all other areas I have done very little except the seminars. I ran my first one last November very successfully. The seminars are workshop based and I received very encouraging feedback. A number of people have already asked me when the next one runs - they'd like to enrol, so word of mouth is positive.

South Africa

From the Home Ed discussion group on the internet Gayle and Owen Joubert give their personal views on new South African legislation:

For those who may be interested, (sorry if this has already been discussed and I have missed it), the SA government has now formulated policy regarding home education. Some time ago people were jailed for not sending their children to school, then it became open policy where you had to get permission from your local authority but there was no set legislation. Now it seems they are targeting home educators and the ruling is: Children *have* to be registered as home schooled;

Children have to be tested, at parent's expense, every 3 years to assess progress;

National Curriculum must be adhered to (as a minimum);

At least 3 hrs contact teaching/schooling must be done each day;

Get this ... an attendance register must be kept! (My son says "like I won't attend home!")

All work must be kept available for inspection, dated and marked.

You have to register afresh each year.

Children are registered even at private schools and when leaving have to have a transfer to home schooling.

Although legislation says that authorities should reply to applications within a month, this is not happening and they are stretching it out. Prior to permission being received children have to attend

school. Even the School of Tomorrow which supplies ACE curriculum (approved and updated to the NC) has been forced to ensure that all pupils receiving curriculum are registered (at a fee) at one of their approved schools and all work must be overseen by that school. When we started to HE we were in SA and I used to adapt the books to each child .. now with the new laws you can't do that and they will insist that every bit of busy work and tedious revision is done regardless of whether the child knows the work or not.

But it seems that it's not all bad news for home educators around the world. It might just be heartening for some of them to learn that as auspicious a body as the **United States Senate** has given its stamp of approval to their chosen form of education. In September last year a resolution was passed stating that 'the United States is committed to excellence in education' and 'recognizes the importance of family participation and parental choices in pursuit of that excellence' as well as 'the fundamental right of parents to direct the education and upbringing of their children' because 'parents want their children to receive a first-class education'. The Senate observed that 'training in the home strengthens the family and guides children in setting the highest standards for their lives which are essential elements to the continuity of morality in our culture' and 'home schooling families contribute significantly to the cultural diversity important to a healthy society [...]' ...United States home educators and home instructed students should be recognized and celebrated for their efforts to improve the quality of education'.

(full text to be found in the website of the Homeschooling Federation of New Zealand, www.homeschooling.org.nz)

Please send education-related news clippings or news to Ann Kennedy Smith, address on inside front cover.

THE SUMMERHILL SCHOOL SAGA

and what it means for home education

ALAN THOMAS

A.S. NEILL, the founder of Summerhill School in 1921, surely never imagined the fate of his school would be decided in the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand in the year 2000. Well it was, and in dramatic fashion. The famous, very small school of 50+ pupils had challenged the Right Honourable David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education and Employment and the Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) inspectors. The result was a complete vindication of the school's cherished principles. The implications for alternative forms of education, including home education, are positive and far-reaching.

The whole saga of Summerhill's long running battle with the authorities, going back to around 1990, will no doubt be told elsewhere. Suffice it to say that the most recent Ofsted Inspection in 1999 essentially concluded that voluntary attendance at lessons meant that non-attending pupils were 'allowed to drift and fall behind', even though GCSE attainment, by no means a school priority, was above the national average. The DfEE decided to issue a Notice of Complaint to the school. Had the school complied with the Complaint and forced attendance at lessons or supervised study, it would have meant the end of Summerhill.

The only other option, a very costly one, was to appeal to the Independent Schools Tribunal. The case was heard in March, each side represented by solicitors and barristers. Zoe Readhead, the daughter of A.S. Neill, in whose name the appeal was made, was absolutely determined to leave no stone unturned in her efforts to save the school and turned to the well known human rights lawyers, Mark Stephens and Geoffrey Robertson QC who worked on the case for reduced fees. The amount of work the teachers and pupils at the school, independent and expert witnesses, parents, volunteers and friends of the school put into the appeal, without payment, was phenomenal, over a period lasting 9 months. Still, the cost to the school was in the region of £150,000, about half of which has been met by voluntary contributions.

On the first day in court, a Monday, the atmosphere was tense to say the least. Nearly all the children and most of the teachers were there. It goes without saying that the children behaved exactly as anyone would be expected to behave in a court of law. They did not need to be confined to any part of the court with teachers placed strategically among them to keep order - it was obvious that it did not even occur to the teachers to do so. They were responsible for their own behaviour.

The first two days saw a very senior civil servant from the DfEE, the Registrar for Independent Schools, on the witness stand. Under cross examination he squirmed, dodged, weaved, avoided answering direct questions. To no avail - he was grilled, or rather griddled!

One of the complaints against the school, that the toilets were not segregated for males and females, was withdrawn on the first day. Even this could not be done clearly by the masters of fudge. The DfEE lawyer tried to say that they were satisfied now that there were enough toilets, or something to that effect. The judge, obviously irritated, had to ask if this meant the toilets did not need to be segregated. It took some further exchanges before it was finally clarified and the complaint withdrawn.

By the time Sir Humphrey (of 'Yes, Minister'), as one newspaper dubbed him, had been dispatched, it was Wednesday. By now the DfEE had obviously decided to advise Mr Blunkett to cave in. In one sense, this was very good news for Summerhill. Had the school gone on and won the case it would simply have meant that the Complaints would have been

annulled. The inspectors could have walked into the school the next week and started all over again. In the agreement, however, A.S. Neill's philosophy was confirmed. Moreover, it was clearly stated that future inspections would have to take account of the reports of the expert witnesses. One of these was on the philosophy of the school and the shortcomings of the recent inspection. The other, mine, was based on my research into home education - more on this below.

By Thursday morning it was all over. The agreement was read out in court, followed by a scene I would not have missed for anything. Mr Blunkett had signed the agreement. So that was alright then. Well, no it wasn't quite. It was necessary to have a Summerhill General Meeting of staff and pupils to ratify it. The judge and his two colleagues on the bench agreed to retire to allow the court to be used for the meeting.

So Summerhill took over the court! The agreement was debated, questions were put to Zoe and to the lawyers. Finally, the meeting unanimously ratified the agreement, the panel of judges returned and the case was closed. I never believed I would see a lawyer in tears, but I did. And not surprising. It was Imogen McLean, a colleague of Mark Stephens, who had worked full time on the case for nine months and knew all the ins and outs of it better than anyone.

Yet... a huge question remains. Why did the DfEE pursue the matter so far and yet never make a case in open court? Were they afraid that Ofsted would be defeated for the first time ever, and by a tiny school at that? That mainstream schools would feel more empowered to challenge Ofsted inspections rather than working their socks off for months before an inspection and then genuflecting to the inspectors as they entered the school gates? In other words, were they afraid that Emperor Ofsted would be shown to have no clothes? More seriously, why the waste of so much taxpayers money, not to mention the huge debt incurred by the school? I would have thought this was a case for punitive damages for wasting the court's and school's time and causing so much stress and heartache.

What are the implications for home educators? Here I can only touch on them. As I said, it is stated in the agreement that future inspections will have to take account of the reports of the named expert witnesses, including mine. My report, based on my research into home education, illustrated that there is no one way of educating children. Home educating parents use a very wide variety of methods, from those so formal they would even surprise Ofsted inspectors to those far more informal than Summerhill. Moreover, there is research, including mine, which demonstrates what most of you already know very well, that a great deal of academic, school-type, learning takes place without direct teaching, outside any formal learning. That is the only way to explain how children in Summerhill who miss a couple of years' maths lessons, or any other subject, somehow seem to catch up in a couple of weeks when they start attending. Of course the opportunities and supportive environment have to be there, as they are in Summerhill and in the homes of home educators.

What this means is that the DfEE now approves a variety of approaches to fostering children's academic development including informal and autonomous learning, and it accepts that progress, including learning to read, does not have to be measured according to national norms. Any home educator who feels intimidated by an LEA official who believes that home education is only valid insofar as it is like mainstream school, can now quote the agreement between the DfEE and Summerhill. The DfEE is now on side!

Dr Alan Thomas is Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Education, University of London, and author of *Educating children at home*, Cassell.

The Summerhill agreement

Summerhill School had been subjected to frequent Ofsted inspections over recent years, and these inspections had become increasingly critical. What had not come to light until the tribunal hearing was that since 1990 the school had been on a secret 'to be watched' (TBW) list.

The DfEE's 'Notice of Complaint' had listed a number of specific grounds of complaint. Some of these grounds had been accepted, but others were problematical since they affected the essential ethos of the school. The main issue was whether attendance at lessons should be compulsory.

Zoe Readhead had appealed to the tribunal in respect of three of the listed complaints. One of these, which related to toilets, was withdrawn on the first day of the hearing. During the subsequent course of the hearing assurances were given under oath on behalf of the Secretary of State that he did not wish

- to have Summerhill struck off the register;
- to compel children there to attend lessons or to engage in formal self-supported study; or
- to prevent the school from putting into effect the educational philosophy of its founder A.S. Neill.

By this point the DfEE's position had become untenable. In the light of the evidence it was obliged to acknowledge that the Notice of Complaint could no longer be justified. Accordingly an agreement was drawn up between the parties, on the basis of which the DfEE asked the tribunal to annul the other two complaints. The main substance of the agreement was that

- the DfEE recognised Summerhill's right to its own philosophy and aims;
- the school undertook essentially to continue doing what it was already doing;
- the DfEE would review Summerhill's 'TBW' status immediately, and would reduce the programme of inspections to routine levels of frequency and intensity;
- Summerhill would be entitled to submit its own independent reports to the DfEE alongside any future Ofsted reports;
- future assessments of the school would be made on a broader basis, taking into account the school's aims and methods and the views of its pupils.

The Summerhill hearing does not change anything legally for home educators, but it does provide a useful case study in support of our right to educate our children as we choose, as long as we can show that the education we provide is suitable for the child receiving it. Summerhill is a respected example of autonomous education, and may help a conventionally-educated LEA adviser to understand what autonomous home educators are trying to do. If we are ready to give an account of our philosophy, LEAs should respect our right to put it into effect, just as the DfEE has now done in the case of Summerhill.

Rob & Anne Wade

Summerhill in the press

Before the hearing

Traditionally, Summerhill would have been under threat from a Labour government committed to abolishing private education on ideological grounds. But now, with apparatus partly inherited from the previous administrations, it is the victim of an insidious form of state control pervading the public and private sectors alike.

The issue is not just the survival of a tiny radical school in east Suffolk. On the contrary, by taking its case to court Summerhill may be spearheading a mainstream resistance movement.

The desire to be allowed to get on with the job free from official harassment is a familiar one, and it is hardly surprising that, according to a recent survey, many no longer view teaching as a career for life. So what on earth has happened?

Quite simply, the joy of sharing with young people the skills one is passionate about is so often submerged in the paraphernalia of assessment and there is growing alarm that childhood itself is being lost.

Laurence Johnson (former teacher at Summerhill),
Times educational supplement, 17 March

Day 1

Summerhill is not failing its pupils, but ... Ofsted is failing the Secretary of State in providing him in this case with bad advice.

Geoffrey Robertson QC, 20 March

On paper, today's court battle is between Zoe Readhead and David Blunkett. But what the legal teams will really be fighting over is who is responsible for a child's education: parents or State.

Robert Powell, *The Express*, 20 March

Day 3

The canker of low-grade teaching in the mainstream of state education has forced successive governments to prescribe in detail the teaching of literacy and numeracy, and we have supported this. But if in the process it extinguishes gentle, marginal, private educational experiments like Summerhill, then prescription begins to look like ideological tyranny.

Leading article, *Evening standard*, 22 March



After the hearing

In the agreement, hailed by Summerhill's owner, Zoe Redhead [sic], as 'a triumph', the Department for Education and Employment appears to acknowledge that its inspection system is flawed by saying that future checks by the schools watchdog Ofsted must recognise that learning is not necessarily confined to formal lessons. ...

Ms Redhead insisted yesterday that the school had not agreed to make any concessions to the DfEE, and that it would continue to provide a 'stimulating environment' for youngsters both within and outside timetabled lessons.

Rebecca Smithers, *The Guardian*, 24 March

... The big reason for backing Summerhill is its emphasis on freedom of choice. I might quibble over the wisdom of giving children the freedom to choose whether to attend lessons, but parents choose the school - not just despite its unusual character, but because of it. Having a go at Summerhill, the Government has really been expressing its lack of faith in parents' ability to decide what is best for their own children. And that idea is surely more objectionable than a few deviations from the national curriculum.

Jennie Bristow, *The Daily telegraph*, 25 March

Work has become more or less optional in our society - not only for those with money, but more particularly for those with none at all. Why should not school work be optional, too? It might prove a better preparation for life in the long run.

If there is any source of misery greater than being forced to learn something you do not wish to learn, this can only be found in having to teach children who do not wish to learn it. I see greater happiness for us all in the Summerhill victory.

Auberon Waugh: *Way of the world*, *The Daily telegraph*, 25 March

... The Education Department told the world that Blunkett and Summerhill 'have reached agreement'. ... The announcement was mendacious in every respect. There had been no agreement. Redhead had seen off Blunkett and Woodhead. The school was not going to push pupils into lessons or assess them but, as the tribunal said, would 'continue to provide a stimulating learning environment'; Summerhill gained the right to carry on as before. ...

Readhead is too touchy-feely for my taste. But cranky though she may be, she took on New Labour's suffocating command society. In her small way she exposed a system of fixing that runs from the stuffing of the unelected House of Lords to the placing of friendly big businessmen on policy task forces. Good for her.

Nick Cohen, *The Observer*, 2 April

The spin put out by the DfEE tried to imply some kind of moral victory: it hopes we will think that thanks to Auntie Ofsted, the school undertook to improve teaching standards and 'encourage' children to go to its optional classes. Summerhill did no such thing. It merely undertook to continue upholding the principles of A.S. Neill, as before. ...

The DfEE complaint spoke of the school not reaching 'national expectations' and Geoffrey Robertson QC rightly picked up that phrase. How *dare* the state presume to dictate the detail and pace of every child's mental unfolding? Are we products, to be quality-controlled as units of state wealth? ...

From Gordonstoun to Hill House, from convent cloisters to Quaker foundations, every independent school in the country with the slightest pretension to individuality is a bit safer today.

Libby Purves, *Times educational supplement*, 7 April

FROM THE ARCHIVES...

DOING MATHS THE OLD WAY

Researched by Sarah Guthrie

Felix got wildly excited over negative numbers: 'They're going backwards into an endless dark cave, and the positive numbers are out in the sunshine going forwards'...He had a phase of estimating, and went round with a steel tape measure in his pocket for a few weeks. Everywhere we went we had to guess the length of things, and he would measure them. Once we had to climb back into the park at dusk so he could retrieve the tape from a seat where he knew he'd left it. (Anne Wade, June 1988)

The boys' first task of the day was to clean out and feed the chickens. Given a few chicks, Grant bred and reared 60 hens. He also built their runs. Now the birds have provided him with a successful business which produces some 40 eggs a day. "It was the best way to teach him maths" says his mother. He keeps his own books and is showing his younger brother how to do the same. "they learn what is required. And they learn when they want to." (Brenda Parry, writing in 1979 in the *Daily Telegraph*, reprinted in the newsletter *Digest*)

I used to occasionally buy lolly ices for the children when out on excursions, but I resented that they always chose the expensive ones. I have solved the problem; they have an allowance. Edward's allowance is on paper and he deducts everything he spends to find his latest total. The advantages are twofold- he now buys the less expensive lolly but also is getting very good at subtraction. (Geraldine Lockington, December 1980)

One of Ursula's 'weaknesses', as the LEA inspector saw it, was 'number work'. I explained to her how important they thought it was and asked her if she would mind doing some, just to keep them happy...she had no trouble at all picking up long multiplication, addition of large numbers, and division. Even though she found it so easy, I found it very phoney teaching her things like this in the old 'teachery' way. (Peter Jones, December 1982)

Apparently, our last LEA Advisor had listed us down as 'traditional maths, advanced but narrow.' As we use Cuisenaire rods and textbooks, I could understand their confusion...I tried to explain that we supplement maths with other experiences, eg. cooking, shopping, timetables, chess, logic games, puzzles, etc. 'Measuring a shed to see if it would be possible to move it to another location; that Ben had done a survey of the volume of traffic that passed our house for one day, and made his own bar graph of the results. "Gosh, is there that much traffic in Westleton?" he said, glancing at it and the tossing it aside. "But what about volume and capacity?" (Charlotte Keith, June 1990)

FROM THE ARCHIVES...

What were you doing 15 months ago? Imagine that those past 15 months have been spent doing nothing but learning mathematics - 8 hours every day, five days a week - and you have some idea of the amount of time a typical child spends in mathematics lessons in primary and secondary schools up to the age of 16. Is it worth it?.....Her Majesty's Inspectorate has said: 'At the extreme utilitarian end of the range of reasons for teaching mathematics, each person needs to know enough arithmetic to make simple purchases, count change, check wages and understand a popular newspaper.'

(Extract from an article written in 1984 by Michael Cornelius, senior lecturer in education at the university of Durham, for the TES.)

The Animal School

Written by educator Dr. R.H. Reeves.

Once upon a time, the animals decided they must do something heroic to meet the problems of a "New World," so they organized a school. They adopted an activity curriculum consisting of running, climbing, swimming and flying. To make it easier to administer, all animals took all subjects.

The duck was excellent in swimming, better in fact than his instructor, and made excellent grades in flying, but he was very poor in running. Since he was low in running he had to stay after school and also drop swimming to practise running. This was kept up until his web feet were badly worn and he was only average in swimming. But average was acceptable in school, so nobody worried about that except the duck.

The rabbit started at the top of the class in running, but had a nervous breakdown because of so much makeup in swimming.

The squirrel was excellent in climbing until he developed frustrations in the flying class where his teacher made him start from the ground up instead of the tree-top down. He also developed charley horses from over-exertion and he got a C in climbing and a D in running.

The eagle was a problem child and had to be disciplined severely. In climbing class he beat all the others to the top of the tree, but insisted on using his own way of getting there.

At the end of the year, an abnormal eel that could swim exceedingly well and also could run, climb and fly a little had the highest average and was valedictorian.

The prairie dogs stayed out of school and fought the tax levy because the administration would not add digging and burrowing to the curriculum. They apprenticed their children to the badger and later joined the groundhogs and gophers to start a successful private school.

Reproduced from The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey

Homeschooling for the right reasons?

I think the reason you need to ask that question is because most of us have the idea that homeschooling and public schooling are equivalent with just some minor differences. There are actually huge compromises that need to be made in the learning environment in order for a school to function. The following seems a bit extreme, but even in the best schools, it's there. Some schools may be better at counteracting the effects, but these things are built into the way we've structured our schools.

Compromise one: Schools run as assembly lines. Every child needs to learn the same thing at the same time or the production line can't function. The next teacher in line needs her product (children) in a certain state so she can apply her process to them. If they are knowledge- and skill-wise all over the board, she can't work efficiently. Regardless of how much a teacher tries to treat her students as individuals, she still has to fulfil the needs of the school.

And yet, it isn't natural for all kids to be ready to read at the same time, or do pencil and paper math. So the schools have to work extra hard and emphasise those skills because the "schools" need the kids doing these on a specific time schedule. To use an analogy, it's like kids who wouldn't naturally walk until 18 months who are put into remedial walking lessons at 12 months because "schools" need them walking as soon as possible. Whose needs are being served and what do those needs do to the psyche of the child?

It isn't natural for all kids to want to learn about whales on the 3rd week of September. Interest is what drives our learning, so teachers learn in teaching college to talk up the next lesson to spark as much interest as possible. (There's a specific phrase for this technique.) And if children have other interests, they learn their own need to be set aside because what the teacher wants them to learn is more important. (It took me years to relearn that my own interests weren't just stuff to fill my leisure time with, that they were actually important.)

Every child is different and yet every child is expected to learn by listening, reading, memorising and testing. Those whose natural learning style is different just have to work harder. And if they don't work harder, they're lazy or dumb. "They" need to adapt themselves to the environment rather than the other way around. They learn that there is something wrong with them for not being able to learn as easily as everyone else. Yet if the environment matched their learning style, they would be the smart ones and the others would be the dumb ones.

Compromise two: Socialisation. John Taylor Gatto pointed out in *Dumbing Us Down* (I think it was) that our schools are based on the Prussian school model. And the reason the Prussians devised the system they did was to weaken loyalty a child had to his family and strengthen his bond with the state. When you think about it, you can see it happening but in a different way, because our teachers aren't demanding loyalty. Children do, of course, make friends at school, but they also view their peers as a substitute family. They want to be accepted by this new family and look to their peers for clues on how to behave so they aren't rejected.

We, as a society, have accepted that children need to be away from their families. That children must learn to be independent and the sooner the better. In fact it's not uncommon for a (brainwashed) parent to be very surprised that you aren't sending your 3 year old to pre-school. They need to learn to socialise, don't you know?

And yet, it's totally unnatural for children to be separated from their families. It's human nature to be dependent until natural drives for independence kick in during the teen years. Children need a supportive, nurturing environment in order to learn and grow. Homes are like home made

whole wheat bread and schools are like factory-made white bread. The whole wheat has all the natural nutrients left in and whatever extras the baker feels like adding. The white bread has them all stripped out and the "important" ones artificially replaced. Regardless of how warm and nurturing a teacher tries to make her room, it's still a pale substitute for home.

So, because children lose their families for an important part of the day, they seek a substitute. They don't have mom to give them a hug or whatever their mother knows works best for them when things aren't going well, so they accept the generic response that the teacher uses for all kids. They seek elsewhere among their peers and/or change themselves. They learn to like what their peers like and dislike what their peers dislike. They learn to cover up any emotions that might single them out. They learn to fit in.

Compromise three: The myth of great education. Supposedly the goal of public schools is to make sure kids rise to their greatest potential. It's often expressed as making sure they can be whatever they want to be once they finish high school. Can it truly be said that a student who has the skills to be anything she wants to be and yet has no idea what she wants to be because she's never had the time or opportunity to explore her likes and dislikes, be considered a product of good education? How many high school graduates go onto college choosing an area of study because it seems not as boring as other things or just because job prospects are good in that field? Schools are so focused on skills and knowledge that kids have no idea what the skills and knowledge are good for. They've had it drummed into them that they'll be "good for the future". But once we're out of school we realise what a crock that is!

It's nice to think of a great school as all kids rushing to history class and being involved in lively discussions where all opinions are treated with respect and all opinions equal fodder for debate. Where all the kids are absolutely passionate about their English classes, where the teacher can engage them with her love of words and love of Shakespeare so that the kids feel what Hamlet felt. Where the science classes are involved in solving problems facing society as the students self-discover the knowledge they need to deal with the problem? Is any of that happening?

How exactly are the schools in your state being ranked? What constitutes "best"? Is it standardised test scores? Is it number of students going to college? Is it happiness and well-adjustment? Are the kids trained to do well on standardised tests or are they encouraged to learn how to think for themselves and be creative? One may look better on paper, but which one would you rather hire? Which one is more likely to know themselves and know what they want in life?

Are those compromises worth a great biology and chemistry lab? (Assuming you don't have a community college nearby where your child could take these courses.)

Written by Joyce Fetteroll in response to the question, "Am I homeschooling for the 'right' reasons?"

This article was found on an internet bulletin board: <http://www.home-ed-magazine.com/DSC/discus/messages/4/330.html?TuesdayFebruary1520000557am#POST2943> and submitted by Beverley Young (Lancashire)

Flexi-schooling

Ever since we decided not to send our four children to school about seven years ago, we have been interested in the idea of flexi-schooling. We sympathise with the idea of school as a kind of catalogue of options into which one can dip. We also feel that to be home-educating, with school for a part of the time, has the potential for giving our children the "best of both worlds" and an experience which would enable them to empathise with school children.

Our initial enquiries met with rebuff. The headteacher and governors at our village school were not interested and that is crucial. The decision does not rest with the LEA but with the head and governors. I detest the idea of the "school run" and, in any case, see part of the reason for flexi-schooling as allowing us to take a bigger part in our community life, so enquired no further afield.

About a year ago, we were experiencing a tricky patch in our home education. One of our daughters seemed particularly unhappy with the way things were going and we began to wonder if she would prefer school. One way or another, the flexi-schooling option seemed worth pursuing again. An acting head had been appointed at the village school and we were in the strong position of having two good, sympathetic friends on the governors. Knowing four of the other governors vaguely, we felt that this might well be a very good time to try again.

Apparently, there was some initial concern, mainly along the lines of, "Would this set a precedent?" One of our friends was quick to point out that this was hardly likely! There were concerns that our children should feel part of the school, and, ultimately, there were concerns about how they would affect the school's test scores. If we boycotted the SATS, we would adversely affect the scores – it is only a small school. Essentially, however, we were given the go-ahead on the proviso that the new headteacher who would arrive the next term, was happy with the idea.

The children went on an initial visit. I stayed at the request of my two daughters and did some observation and some listening to reading. Everyone felt happy to try again – in fact, two of our children wanted to start school full-time! (This was my worst fear realised and was particularly galling as much of what I had observed was not particularly inspiring – it was three days before the end of the summer term.) We tackled this by explaining that it was early days yet and that we wanted to give the flexi-schooling option a good try.

The next phase was to meet the new headteacher, which couldn't happen until about two weeks after she had started at the school. She was happy to go ahead and had formal details of what the governors requested as part of the deal. Our children were to abide by the school rules, wear the uniform and to take Keystage 2 SATs. The scheme was to be reviewed after six months. Although I wasn't happy about the SATs idea as a point of principle, we decided to continue. Because our children are now registered with the LEA, the school is in the happy position of receiving the appropriate financial allocation for each of them, so we feel future arrangements may be negotiable.

Uniform has been donated by a good friend and bought very cheaply from the school swap-shop. I dislike the idea of uniform but the children don't mind. Supervision of the flexi-schooling agreement is at the discretion of the headteacher. Her legal duty is to ensure that the National Curriculum is delivered to the children whilst they are in school.

The final task was to look at the timetable and decide what we wanted to do. Our headteacher was happy to let us choose from the full timetable but this is not a legal right. We were

particularly keen to find something that involved working co-operatively in a large group, as this has been the experience most difficult to provide at home. Wednesday afternoons looked perfect. Everyone would be doing RE and games. An added bonus was that the children could join in with netball and football clubs after school if they wanted to. They are doing so. The school also runs a few other after-school clubs which, now that they are registered, the children can join. One of our sons has tried out the Knitting Club and we are considering joining the Drama Group.

In one sense, flexi-schooling is a misnomer. The children have to attend on a regular basis. They can't dip in and dip out whenever they feel like it, or whatever lessons they choose. The flexible part is in being able to decide which bits we want to attend for an agreed period. One could, in theory, negotiate any amount of time in school, so long as it was regular.

So far, about three months into the scheme, everything is going reasonably smoothly. The boys have even been in the football team – it's a small school, remember! One of our daughters thought she'd been to a Ferrari lesson the first week, which we all thought sounded jolly interesting. It transpired that she'd misunderstood what I'd told her – that she would be going to school "for RE"! We haven't had any major problems. Our oldest son has noticed how much time things can take – getting changed for games inevitably takes ages – but on the whole, everyone seems reasonably positive. Having had time to weigh things up, no one now wants to go to school full-time. There has been some comment on the poor behaviour of a minority of the children and the disciplining it leads to. I find this very interesting as our children are far from angelic at home and I am certainly not the patient and endlessly reasonable mother I would like to be! I'm particularly happy to have a couple of hours to myself once a week; I'm not sure I can continue to keep my motives entirely pure! We were invited to take part in various Christmas activities, including a day making decorations. I went to help, which was a very enjoyable and interesting experience, except for the heat. Our sons opted to return home at lunchtime with me, whereas our daughters decided to stay for the full day. One came home with a headache, complaining about the noise and they were both very bad-tempered in the evening. I think we'll stick with one afternoon per week!

The teachers are very thoughtful in letting us have information about trips and special events. Right now, we are looking forward to a free trip to the Millennium Dome as the school was successful in the lottery for tickets.

"I like flexi-schooling," said one of our daughters the other day. "Everyone's very nice to you because you don't go very often." Say no more! We are very grateful to our local school, its staff and governors for their open-minded and extremely welcoming attitude and hope that this piece of iconoclasm will be an inspiration to others. Please contact us if you want to know more, though there isn't much to add!

Margaret Harper The Malt House, Silver Street, Chacombe, Banbury, Oxon OX17 2JR



Growing Outdoors

This article was intended to be included in the last edition's special section about the importance of trips out. Unfortunately, due to an oversight (alright, incompetence!) on my part, it was not included when the edition went to print. My apologies to Jon. No wonder I didn't get the Times job! Andy Newton (andynewton@cwcom.net)

There's something very liberating and egalitarian about going out on an "Expoition" together. Our family favourites are almost all free and all local. Living as we do on the edge of Dorchester we're in the wonderful situation of being near sea, farmland, open countryside and town. And with the Iron Age fort of Maiden Castle overlooking our back garden we feel really spoiled by such treasures.

Most days we go for a walk along "Maiden Castle road" or up onto the castle itself. There's so much to captivate the mind and eye while we're out. Every moment of every day has a special quality of its own. The light. The clouds. Rainbows. The greening of the hedgerows and the building of bird nests are fascinating to watch at the moment. Likewise looking out for courting hares and a small herd of roe deer that visit from time to time brings a sense of expectation to our wanderings.

The weather too is glorious. Rain. Wind. Snow. Sun. We're always out. Amidst the wildest of winter gales, with torches in hand, hats and coats wrapped around us and wellington boots firmly on, Tim (4) and I set out into the howling darkness that roared about us last Christmas Eve. The rain blasted us from every side and great torrents of water ran off the flooded hillsides bringing with it great slews of mud from the fields of young winter barley. That one night we watched the water levels rise and fill an empty river bed with a fast flowing river over three feet deep. Stomping and splashing we sang Christmas carols to the wild winds at the tops of our voices!

Last Thursday we were in Abbotsbury, on the edge of Chesil beach. After an hour just sitting on the pebbles and watching the storm-threshed waves thundering onto the shore against the backdrop of a crystal clear sky we walked back into the village. By the Medieval Tithe Barn we watched as a couple of buzzards took to the thermals. Higher and higher they circled until neither of us could pick them out against the sky. As they climbed we saw more adding to their number until ten wheeled and arced their way through the crisp, warming spring air.

All three of us love being out of doors. Last year we cultivated our garden, turning a bit of overgrown wasteland into a highly productive kitchen garden. We managed to plant and grow almost all the vegetables we ate for the second half of the year. And we did it all together. In digging out the plot we found evidence of the many people who'd lived around our home. From modern plastic objects (pegs, twine, etc.), through broken Victorian and Edwardian domestic pottery, one or two coins, right through to an arrow-head and hand axe from possibly 3500 or 4500 years ago. This year we're tackling an allotment nearby, and again bringing it back into cultivation after a number of years of disuse. And again the history and geology is there between your fingers or under your fork.

None of these things is out of the ordinary. None of them cost much (if anything) to do. But what a rich gift to be able to share them together. Watching, looking, attending, listening, singing, splashing, walking, and simply living in the heart and humus of this extraordinary land.

Jon Sloper lives with Tim (4) and Liz Fawkes, 10 Monkton, Winterborne Monkton, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 9PT 01305 260586 jonsloper@jpsloper.surfaid.org



Problem page

A PROBLEM ANSWERED:

My 6yr old son is not keeping up with the school curriculum and, according to the head, is immature. He is hyperactive and cannot concentrate for long. He has started to mix with a 'wild' crowd. I do not want to home-educate long term but would welcome other suggestions.

Here is a selection of the answers received:

My son who is now 17, was just the same. I insisted the school got a dyslexia test done, also to check him for ADD - neither of which were really recognised at this time. Once diagnosed with dyslexia the school knew how to organise his day. He was 'over-active' due to boredom and not totally understanding what he was to do. He is now doing an NVQ in 6th Form. I can remember asking him why he played with the 'bad' boys - his 6year old answer, "they have more fun". I could see his reasoning but kept a straight face!

You may find it helpful to look at his diet. Artificial colours, additives such

as sodium benzoate and 621 had a profound effect on my son.

Children do not all develop at the same rate. 6 is very young to be doing formal work - in many countries he would not start formal education until 7. Let him be!

Home educate with an open mind. Why don't you want to do it long term? Maybe as time goes by your fears around home education may subside. 'Schooling' may not suit your child.

In a few months try another school. In the meantime, introduce him to activities where he will meet other children.

Please send replies to the following problem or any problems you would like to put forward for this page to tackle, to Sue White.

I cannot get my 13year old daughter actively interested in ANYTHING. She seems to have no imagination and I end up prompting, pushing and nagging. I fear she is turning into a 'boring lump'. How can I help her and avoid problems with the LEA

EDUCATING ARCHIE *by SFG*

A letter from the Inspector. It must be sprung!

LEA HQ UK
Dear Mrs G
I CUR due
① 4 an
inspect shun.
Put the kettle
on. Yours, Mrs

AND WHEN HE COMES, DON'T CONTRADICT ME ALL THE TIME LIKE YOU USUALLY DO

DON'T

EO-type things to show inspector *

* 'experiments' with rubber bands, home-made (failed) wormery, paper lantern, paper burned with magnifying glass, two with magnifying glass, two FRINGLES for covering...

AND YOU DO YOUR MATHS REGULARLY, DON'T YOU, ARCHIE?

IF YOU CALL ONCE IN A BLUE MOON, REGULAR, YES

and then we visited an exhibition of old clocks - look

ONLY COS SHE MADE ME BY SAYING IF I DIDN'T I WASN'T TO HAVE AN EASTER EGG

UNFORTUNATELY Archie has got to go OUT now haven't you dear?

No_

because you said that if we can get shot of the inspector quickly, we can put The Simpsons back on

Letters

Please include full name and address when writing to newsletter editors. Name and address can be withheld on request. Due to limited space, some editing may occur.

SIX YEARS OF HOME EDUCATION

It is with a feeling of guilt that finally, after home-educating my daughter, Susan for six years, and feeding from the resources of the EO organisation and newsletter, that I have decided to contribute, hoping that someone else will benefit from our experiences.

Following a few nasty school experiences, we discovered that home schooling was an option and went for it. Once the decision was made, Susan, then aged eight, found it delicious holding the secret that her school days were numbered! It began like a big adventure, and since another child from the same class had been withdrawn at exactly the same time (it was like a bombshell hitting the small school), we had someone to share it with. It was just gorgeous enjoying the freedom of walks in crisp, deep snow, and sledging during 'school hours'.

However, as well as lots of outings, we settled down to work, doing mostly what Susan felt like doing. We have been able to do lots of things together because we had the time - like going for horse riding lessons.

We all joined the local conservation group, persuaded by Susan's brother, Roger, twelve years her senior, and this was one of the best things we did. Through our involvement in this, we went on courses and Susan and I together have built a coracle, a pole late, a living willow arbour and learned how to make hazel wattle hurdles and willow baskets. We have coppiced, planted and made charcoal. We now go into local schools, in school hours, and help children to learn about conservation and the environment and we are involved in giving workshops.

Last year, in July, Susan went to southern Spain for two weeks on a working holiday to join her brother, who was a volunteer worker for six months at Sunseed Desert Technology Project. She was only thirteen then, and coped with cooking for twenty-five people (they cooked in pairs), and with a resident snake in the compost toilet. Perhaps Susan can be persuaded to write an article about her trip. She plans to return there.

Before she went to Spain, she tried for her first GCSE. After a short (September-June) evening course at our local college, where she was welcomed, she gained a C pass in English Literature.

Now Susan is fourteen years old, and at the same college, is studying for GCSE Archeology and a beginners' course in Spanish. At another local senior school she is doing a GCSE course in Drawing and Painting.

Susan is self-motivated and our LEA inspector has no complaints. He is almost a friend now. It saddens me to read about the difficulties some families have with LEAs.

Sometimes I wish I had never put Susan into nursery six months prior to school or into the school system at all. Then I think of the words of Carlo Carretto, "How should we understand joy without weeping, light without darkness, forgiveness without hatred, truth without error." Because of our experiences, we appreciate our present lifestyle so much.

I'd like to thank all those who, in the past six years of our own EO membership, have unknowingly helped us, through their letters and articles in the newsletter. Now, if I in my turn can be of help, please get in touch.

(The Higgins family consists of Joyce and Roger, and children Roger and Susan.)

Joyce Higgins, 18 Carnoustie, Ouston, Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham DH2 1JS

Letters

SEEKING HOME-EDUCATION 'CO-OP'

Having home-educated our daughter from 13-16 years old, we have now decided to repeat the exercise with our son. He is now 10 years old and at school, but we intend to remove him when he completes his primary education at 11 years. However, he is a very lively, sociable boy and the thought of him being at home constantly (despite his computer and some social activities) alarms us!!

Are any readers aware of any home-educating 'co-ops' for children his age, where several children work together assisted by parents? Or does anyone know of any region where there are lots of home-educated kids' activities for this age group? (We have a 'liberal' approach to education, so nothing too curriculum-based.) We are prepared to get involved and to relocate if necessary. Please write with any information.

Lorna and Danny Donohoe, 63 Elphinstone Road, Walthamstow, London E17 5EZ

ADVICE ON STRUCTURED EDUCATION

Andrew and I have two daughters. The eldest, Amy, at six is currently in school but I would like to withdraw her at the end of this school year in order to teach her and Annabel at home. I would very much like to hear from anyone who wouldn't mind sharing their experiences and a little advice on home education. I would particularly like to hear from anyone using a fairly structured approach. Has anyone found a curriculum they would recommend? I found an excellent package from an organisation called the WES Homeschool but I'm afraid we just can't afford their fees. At this point in time I am really just trying to build up my confidence and would like to have some sort of system organised before taking the plunge! So if anyone can help, please contact me.

Ruth Wrool, 98 Wessex Road, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 3LT (01935 476022)

BULLYING SUPPORT

I am the mum of a teenage boy out of school due to bullying. I am very keen to get in touch with other families with similar experience.

Julie Taylor, Court Cottage, Court Lane, Hadlow, Kent, TN11 0DS 01732 850826

THE LIVING TRUST

The Living Village Trust has been running for seven years researching and now building eco-friendly buildings. Our aim is to create pleasant and interesting places to live and work designed to encourage community spirit. Somewhere safe and healthy where children can meet other kids and play away from traffic. Offices, workshops and community buildings are built within the site to reduce car use for travelling to places of work, childcare, schools etc. The buildings are from sustainable and local materials using local labour. At the moment we are at the design stage of an eighteen-acre site on the edge of Bishops Castle in south Shropshire. 40 houses will be built within five acres leaving thirteen acres for recreational and agricultural use.

Within the main community building, the Life Centre, we plan to have a Learning Studio that will focus on the uniqueness of individuals, be committed to the practice of life-long learning, non compulsory, co-operative not competitive, supportive and democratic. An inspirational place in which to play, learn and meet with others. People from the community will be invited share their skills and experience in the form of workshops and one to ones.

We are working with Janet and Roland Meighan from Education Now who are helping us with ideas and structure for the Learning Studio and who are also planning to base their Centre for Personalised Education here. International conferences on education will be hosted here regularly. The Learning Studio will be running as an example of a different approach to education. One will greatly benefit from the other.

Letters

To find out more, please contact *Carole Salmon* or *Robert Tomlinson* at *The Living Village Trust, The Six Bells Centre, Church Street, Bishops Castle Shropshire SY9 5AA. Tel: 01588 638958 Fax: 01588 630 122 e-mail - living.village@btinternet.com*

INVITATION TO ITALY

We are an old EO family; our three children were homeschooled but are now grown up. We run an open farm in Umbria, Italy and we try to keep prices down. We don't charge for staying here, only for food, because it is nice for us to have people coming through, and also we want to make it possible for low income families to have a country holiday. May and June are beautiful months here, but everyone comes in August because of school holidays! Maybe there are EO families who would like a cheap holiday? We are near Gubbio, and we keep horses, donkeys, sheep and hens. You can bring a sleeping bag and just pay for food - Lit. 20.000/day if you relax, Lit. 12.000 if you do 4 hours work, half for children under 12 (Children under 6 free). We all help with housework. We have a big library with many children's books, piano, trees to climb, lots of space, no nearby roads and nearby places to swim. We also rent a small farmhouse down the lane in July and August that sleeps 4; £200/week.

Etain Addey and Martin Lanz, Pratate, Vallingegno, 06020 Scritto, Pg, Italy

SEEKING CONTACT

I am a single parent with a beautiful 4 year-old son called Demyun. We live between Bala and Corwen in North Wales, with our lovely 14 year-old Labrador. I would like to meet or contact other single parent families throughout the country for advice, chats, meetings etc. about home educating as a single parent. Some of our interests include music, gardening, camping, swimming and having loads of fun. We look forward to hearing from you.

Rowenna Williams, 1 Bythynod Crogen, Llandrillo, Corwen, Denbighshire LL21 0SY

We are the Osgerby family, Leanne, Tony and George (4). Are there any families in the Whitby/Robin Hoods Bay/Sacborrough area with children of a similar age, to meet for children to play or for days out? Please, please get in touch. Also - Rachel Baldock of Cambridge, please can you forward your new address as I've mislaid it. It will be lovely to hear from you.

Leanne Osgerby, 28 Bracken Close, Whitby, North Yorks YO22 4HP 01947 602056

Is there a registered childminder who can look after my son 1½ days per week? I can pay for this or organise a swap. My child is 9 years old, quiet, thoughtful, sensitive and easy-going. His current interests are Pokeman trading, karate, climbing trees, reading and classical guitar. I live in Battersea but am prepared to travel if necessary.

Lorraine McConnan, 184c Queenstown Road, London SW8 3NR 0207 6271790

THE DOULA TRAINING NETWORK

Traditionally, through the ages and in many parts of the world still, women have been supported on their life's journey by other women, whom they know and trust. From the onset of the menstrual cycle, through the development of sexuality, in conceiving and birthing babies, mothering and teaching children, and into the menopause and beyond - the wise women in the community are there to nurture and support. These women are known as traditional doulas.

The traditional doula has acquired wisdom through her own experiences, and she is able to share this with other women. Her knowledge covers aspects of health, nutrition, birth, childcare and child development in the early years. The traditional doula works in a holistic way, caring for the whole woman, and is conscious of the spiritual life of the women and their children.

For more information about the *Doula Training Network UK*, write to:
Castle Steadings, Aros Mains, Isle of Mull PA72 6JP or telephone 01680 300620

PEAK CAMP 2000

30th June - 9th July

Informal relaxed gathering in a beautiful part of the Peak District. Share experiences of home educating. Cycle tracks and riverside walks are close by.

The site is the usual one at Barracks Farm, Beresford Dale, near Hartington (grid ref. 123 586) Two large fields for tents and touring caravans, showers, toilets, wash basins and small shop.

Send sae for more details to:
Gary Podmore, 52 Rupert Rd,
Sheffield, S7 1RP
0114 2585702



GWERSYLL DEWI SANT

Pembrokeshire Summer EO Family Camp

Sat. 17th to Sat. 24th June 2000

(It is possible to stay till Sat. 1st July)

In the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Close to St. Davids, West Wales.

Campsite with showers and small shop, some caravans available. 200m to beach, dramatic coastal scenery, surfing, RSPB reserves, leisure park, castles.

Please send SAE (with note if you want caravan info sheet) to:

**Yvette Harley, 17 Maes Ingli,
Newport, Pembrokeshire, SA42
0TE. Tel. 01239 820 968**

Norfolk EO Camp

Sunday 23rd to Friday 28th July

In a private field on the west coast.

Saxon archaeological dig during the week, many local attractions, beach, bird reserve etc.

£1 per person per night

For details contact:

Ali Willer 01603 401020
or Mandy Stratton

LOCAL CONTACT UPDATE

Resignations

Herefordshire: Clare Greenhouse has moved away.

New Acting Local Contacts

Somerset: Vivienne and Stuart Cumming

East Sussex: Tanja Conway-Grim can cover for a while but may be moving at end of year so we are still looking for someone

Areas needing a co-ordinator: -

Cheshire, Gloucestershire South, Gwynedd, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire, Isle of Man, Manchester North, Powys, Strathclyde, Sussex East, Tayside, Warwickshire, Wiltshire

Why not find out more or send your comments to me

Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178

E-mail isobelb@cheerful.com

Attention Cleveland

My apologies for giving an incorrect number for Pauline Butterworth

Her number is: 01642 899247

REQUEST FOR VOLUNTEERS

Do you want to make a contribution to the day to day running of EO?

1. Take on a small but vital task and make a difference for other members. There are a variety of jobs available depending on the time you can offer. Please give some time to support the work of EO.

Contact : **Angela Smith: 01434 322372**

angela@coanwood.freeserve.co.uk

2. **Join a Small Group.** The following small groups have already been set up (council members are in bold)

Finance - **Priscilla**, Lynda, Celia, Ann Till and Ken Grindlay

Enquiries - **Gary, Janet, Pam and Priscilla**

Publications - **Jill, Gary**, Lucy Charlton, Chris Harper, Ali Willer

Newsletter - **Christine, Sue**, Martine Archer, Sally Hall, Ann KS, Sian Podmore, Sue White Sarah Guthrie

Media - **Janet, Jude and Beverley**, and Celia, Eva O'Rorke

Business Practice - **Jill, Priscilla**, Martine and Gwen

DfEE Team - **Anne, Jill** and Gwen

Membership Support - **Isobel and Christine**

New volunteers for any of the groups most welcome, with expertise or just an interest. Contact a member of the group to find out more about it's work. If you are interested in joining please pass your name to Janet Wilkinson (General Secretary).

**Open Council Meeting
Sunday 27th August 2000**

Ripon and York College, York
All E.O. members are very welcome to attend.

To submit an item for the agenda contact the General Secretary, Janet Wilkinson, 31 Framlingham Road, Peterborough PE2 8UG
Tel: 01733 554436

Post holders should submit reports three weeks prior to the meeting.

Free EO Car Stickers

Help us spread the word, please send a reasonably large new SAE for your free sticker to **Ali Willer, 28 Cozens-Hardy Road, Sprowston, Norwich NR7 8QF**. They will only be free during the year 2000.

Newsletter Input and Volunteers

Although the newsletter is now produced by a team of people it is still only as good as the contributions made by members. Please take the time to put your thoughts and experiences down on paper and share them with others. We also still need volunteers to do the Special Section of each issue. Is there a topic you would find of interest? Why not offer to edit the 6-10 pages, only a few hours work, and help make the newsletter a really interesting read. Even if you can't do the next issue contact Christine Adey and put your name down for one in the future that would be at a more convenient time. Volunteers also needed to do the Children's Pages, again contact Christine Adey (see inside front cover). THANK YOU

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.

New members, attending their first meeting, should phone to check it has not been cancelled.

All regular meetings listed below will now be automatically included in every issue. Please notify changes or any meeting no longer taking place to:

Martine Archer, 3 Brookfield, Hampsthwaite, Harrogate HG3 2EF 01423 770396

BATH

H.E.L.P. group meet regularly for outings and activities.

Contact: Louise Jensen 01225 840735

Louise Verran 01225 859852

Bath Hedgehogs

Contact: Jo Ball & Andy Hannen 01225 427371

BERKSHIRE

Mondays - Swimming at Rivermead, Reading 1.30pm. £1.85

Tuesdays - Swimming at Windsor Leisure Centre, noon onwards £2.80

Wednesdays - Ice skating at John Nike Leisure Centre, Bracknell, 2pm - 4pm £1.50 including lesson & skate hire. Show EO card at reception. *Contact: Pat Connor 0118 9662123*

Local newsletter: *Dawn Dingwall 01628 783107*

BIRMINGHAM

Last Wednesday of the month, Central Library 10.30-1.30pm, also ice-skating, indoor rock climbing, ecology and lots more.

Contact: Jackie or Alan 0121 243 8242

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

Newsletter for Bucks/Northants,

Contact: Dawn Waddington 01908 569380

e-mail dawnwaddington@hotmail.com

Fortnightly meetings for crafts, activities, play, speakers, drama, trips to museums, theatre etc.

Contact: Jackie 01753 886924 or Dorothy 01494 782864

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Cambridge - Regular meetings and outings, Ring for a newsletter.

Contact: Penny 01223 526441

Monthly at Alconbury, activities run by Christian group. All welcome

Contact: Audrey Hill 01480 219881

Peterborough - Weekly visits and outings

Contact: Janet Wilkinson 01733 554436

CHESHIRE

Cheshire/Stockport Area; Alt. Ed. News, listing all the educational and social events going on. Available by subscription, or for event information,

Contact: Nicky Forster 01625 869719.

CLEVELAND & DURHAM

Anyone interested in helping to set up a new group please

Contact: Pauline Butterworth 01642 899247

CORNWALL

Twice weekly events all round the county. **CHEERSS** newsletter. To subscribe or for information:

Contact: Anna Wheeler, Cambrose Farm,

Redruth, TR16 4HT 01209 890378

e-mail anna@wheeler19.fsnet.co.uk

CUMBRIA

Informal gatherings for socialising, support and activities

Kendal - alternate Wednesdays Castle St. Youth Centre 12.30-3.30

Penrith - alternate Tuesdays Castletown Community Centre 1.30-3.30

Contact: Sarah Cook 01768 896019

DEVON

Contact: Sammy & Nick Vidal-Hall 01548 830716

Activities - Rock-climbing, 10-pin bowling, 'Magic' sessions, bonfires, chatting, etc..

Contact: Belinda Harris-Reid 01364 643343

Email: bline@compuserve.com

South Devon new group now meeting weekly for activities/outings

Contact: Penny Cook 01626 836747

penny.cook@yvirgin.net

Maddie Lynfield 01364 73854

maddie.connect@yvirgin.net

Ice skating at Plymouth Pavilions
Wednesdays at 12pm.

Contact: Pat Stoolman 01626 854592

DEVON EAST/DORSET WEST

Fortnightly meetings at Monkton Wyld Court.

Activities + grounds to play in. For events list

Contact: Habiba 01297 561070

Lisa 01297 445685

DORSET

Regular meetings, keep in touch.

Contact: Christine Adey 01258 880355

Rosemary Newton 01747 853593

Bournemouth/Pool/Christchurch, 2nd

Tuesday 12-3 Parkstone Boys and Girls Club,
Recreation Rd, Parkstone, Pool.

Contact: Sandra Innes 01258 450882

Wendy Irving 01202 438254

ESSEX

Colchester- fortnightly meetings, Wednesdays.

£2.50 per family.

Contact: Sue Johnston 01206 520284

35 Letha Grove, Colchester, Essex CO2 8RG

Also monthly meetings in Chelmsford and
weekly meetings in Southend.

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

Contact: Sandie Cottee 01268 733259

17 South View Rd, Rettendon, Chelmsford CM3
8DX

FIFE

Outings & get togethers

Contact: Karen Spy 01334 655361

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

**1st Tuesday in month at Twynning near
Tewkesbury.**

Every Thursday swimming and trampolining.

Other outings every month- play areas, ice
skating, bowling, climbing, picnics, crafts etc.

Contact: Rob or Fiona Brookes 01684 290087

brookes@openhorizons.screaming.net

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Hants SO30 7FH daywest@dircon.co.uk
01243 528508

**Fareham, Gosport, Winchester,
Southampton area.** P.W.C. Home Education
Group meet regularly for ten-pin bowling,
swimming, and many other activities. All
welcome.

Contact: Gayle Joubert 01705 553842 or Deborah
Bull 01705 587868

**Group for young children meeting for
socialising, invite others to join.**

Contact: Alison or Nicholas 0170 3 283727

HANTS/WEST SUSSEX

Teenager Day; every 2nd Tuesday of the
month. Activities planned by the group, for any
home educators 12+. Meeting in the Chichester
area.

Contact: Edward 01243 528508

Activities and support, all welcome Solent
Area EO (S.A.E.O.)

Contact: Sally Andrews 01794 368821 or

Bernadette Bury 01243 264837

ISLE OF WIGHT

**Fridays - picnics, BBQs, swimming,
photography.** All ages welcome.

Contact: Jude 01983 531680

Jackie 01983 530378

KENT

Regular meetings & activities:

Canterbury -

Contact: Irene Judd 01227 709570

Medway towns -

Contact: Bridget Becci 01634 234938

Tunbridge Wells -

Contact: Kim Dale 01892 863941

For theatre outings and events listing send sae
to: Amanda Mackenzie 16, Brambletree Cott,
Borstal Rochester, ME1 3TN.

LANCASHIRE

Regular meeting, please ring.

Contact: Angelika Walter 01254 603 497

Meetings at Burnley Central Library
Children's department, first Monday of the
month.

Contact: Lorraine Jessop 01706 879424

LEICESTERSHIRE

**Frequent meetings for play, crafts, walks,
hanging out, singing, swimming, science,
skating and much more.**

Contact: Lise 0116 242 5802

LONDON

Bi-weekly for socialising & support. Ages 1-8 yrs. Tues am swimming (Brittania Leisure Centre Islington) Wed am Clissold Park
Contact: Charlotte 0171 254 0419

Wednesdays -Honor Oak playground.
Contact: Keith Hertog 0181 776 859

SE London/West Kent, new group being set up in Orpington, Sidcup, Bromley area. For workshops, fun and educational activities,
Contact: Kate 01732 458804

NW London Otherwise Club
Contact: Leslie 0181 969 0893

Wandsworth HE Group, Tuesdays fortnightly from 26th October. Meeting at 12.15, cost £3.50 per family, for directions
Contact: Shan 0181 673 6307
E-mail: shan@hogonline.co.uk

Middlesex Harrow Leisure Centre 1-2pm probably fortnightly meetings.
Contact: Karen Clarke 0181 907 7797

MANCHESTER

Bi-weekly at Peel Moat Sports Centre, Stockport. Sports, games, all ages welcome £1.40 per child.

Contact: Gil Wilson 0161 442 8723

Monthly formal art classes at Stockport Art Gallery. £1 per child

Contact: Gil Wilson 0161 442 8723

Anyone from 10+ age group wanting to get together for activities please, any suggestions gratefully received!

Contact: Gil Wilson 0161 442 8723

Computing Skills, 1st & 2nd Sats at Moore family's home. Limited places.

Contact: Karen 01204 573136

Firwood Social meeting alternate weeks.

Contact: Pam and Nick on 0161 862 9621

Manley Park Autonomous HE Group, Wednesdays 11-3 Come and play at Manley Park Methodist Church, Cromwell Ave, Whalley Range.

Contact: Sue Flindt 0161 881 4830

MADCOW news-sheet (Manchester and District Communication of What's on).

Free. Send stamped addressed envelopes to Gill Wilson, 20 Brook Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport SK4 5BZ.

NOTTINGHAM

Weekly meetings for socialising, support and outings. For full list

Contact: Wendy 0115 9114312

Louise 001773 780634

NORFOLK

NEON gives details of all events. £1.50 plus four large saes.

Contact: Ali Willer 28 Cozens-Hardy Rd Sprowston, Norwich. NR7 8QF 01603 401020.

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 2A

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 Pleased 01865 514973

STAFFORDSHIRE/SOUTH

CHESHIRE/NORTH SALOP

Fortnightly meetings in rural location for crafts, drama, music etc

Contact: Patricia 01785 851150

Stafford: Every 2nd Tuesday meeting in village hall for crafts, games etc. 12-3.30pm.

Contact: Nicola 01785 612410 or Suzanna 01785 252518

SUFFOLK

Meetings every 3 weeks with professional workshops.

Contact: Sarah Guthrie 01379 783678

SURREY

Fridays - Ice skating at Guildford Spectrum 1.30-4.00, £2.35 (+75p for group lesson).

Tuesdays/Thursdays - weekly meetings in and around Guildford.

Contact: Lynne Sowden, 25 Tychbourne Drive, Guildford GU4 7DH (£1.50 for 3 events lists)

SUSSEX

There is something happening nearly every day. **Monthly Newsletter/Events list** - £8 pa or £4 for 6 months, cheques payable to 'ESEO' please, to Sarah Raine, 6 The Diggers, Golf Drive, Brighton, BN1 7LB

We are planning a visit to the Gatwick Aviation Museum end of June or beginning of July. Please send a SAE to Isobel Bogucki if you would like details.

Contact: Tanja Conway-Grim 01435 882623 (East Sussex)

Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178 (West Sussex)

Friday EO Club at Lindfield

Contact: Liz Evans 01444 414058

There have been many teenagers starting on home education in the area recently. What activity or event would appeal to you? Ring Jan 01273 514528 with your suggestions.

Home Educators Hastings Area New group meeting first Monday and third Thursday of the month, plus other outings and day trips.

Contact: Ali Hudson 01424 814175

TYNESIDE

Monthly meetings, visits, activities etc

Contact: Linda Robertson 01911 4567007

WALES

Cardigan area Social meetings and outings on Mondays.

Contact: Yvette Hartley 01239 820 968

Swansea monthly meetings in Llanelli/ area

Contact: Sue Haggerty 01269 861902

NE Wales / Borders - gym/ trampolining in Wrexham (Thurs), meetings in Oswestry area (Tues), W.Cheshire/NE Wales (Mon or Fri)

Contact: Jenny Bove 01978 757489

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

North West Wales has lots of members.

Anyone interested in hosting/organising an event contact Jenny Bove as above

Glamorganshire - Regular group meetings planned once or twice a month. Suggestions and new families,

Contact: Celia McDonough 01633 669104

Gwent - Regular group activities now being arranged. Suggestions and new families welcome.

Contact: Dawn 01495 303468

WEST MIDLANDS

Something happening somewhere in the region several times a week including trips out, a resource centre, activities, science club, bowling, swimming etc. A warm welcome is extended to all home educators. Full details in, HELM, our monthly newsletter. (£7.20 pa incl. postage.)

Contact: Penny Clarke 01922 745465

pennyclarke@homeschool.freeserve.co.uk

Joy Beasley 0121 585 6450

JoyBeasley@b-bunch.freeserve.co.uk

New venue at Coseley. Fortnightly meetings with a resource centre, activities and workshops planned. In the pipeline - science

club, drama group, music & swimming lessons. All home educators welcome.

Contact: Penny Clarke 01922 745465

Joy Beasley 01922 641139

WILTS/DORSET/HAMPS

Lowes Street Hall, off Wetherby Rd, Salisbury. 2-5pm 2nd & 4th Tuesdays Moorsvalley Country Park, nr Ringwood 1st & 3rd Tuesdays.

Contact: Vicky Slater 01722 324863, Wendy Irvine 01202 438254, Becka Bradley Carter 01747 870729.

WORCESTERSHIRE

Regular activity meetings and outings in the north Worcestershire area,

Contact: Gail Tutchner 01562 822034,

email gail@tqmi.co.uk or see the regular page in HELM, West Midlands newsletter.

Weekly meetings Worcestershire area

Contact: Pat 01527 876184

YORKSHIRE - NORTH

Regular meetings & visits etc Please send two second class stamps for quarterly news-sheet, or your e-mail address.

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

YORKSHIRE - EAST

Regular meetings and visits etc. Please send two second class stamps for quarterly news-sheet

Contact: Alison Houston 01405 769902

Hull, informal meetings every Friday, 2pm Pearson Park (nr Conservatory entrance, or inside if cold)

Contact: Karen 01482 345655

YORKSHIRE - SOUTH

Tuesdays 12-3 term time at Highfield Adventure Playground. Outdoor equipment plus indoor room for crafts,

table tennis etc. Free entry, small contribution for materials only. Off London Rd/Abbeydale Rd. Turn up or

Contact: Annette 0114 2583502

Fiona 0114 22751142

Thursday - weekly informal social meetings. All South Yorkshire members

welcome.

Contact: Angie Targett 0114 2817466

Swimming fortnightly, 2nd Tuesday at Hillsborough Leisure Centre 12pm and 4th

Wednesday at Bamsley Metrodome 12.30

Contact: Ian Bennett 0114 2817466

YORKSHIRE - WEST

Outings & activities.

Contact: *Eva 01535 274520*

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

Contact: *Diane 01484 846946*

Second Friday of the month, 1.00 - 4.00 at Moortown Baptist Church, King Lane, Leeds. £2.50 per family

Contact: *Eva 01535 274520*

Susan 0113 268 1137

Last Wednesday of the month, 11.45 Baildon Rec Centre, Shipley

Contact: *Trish Flynn 01274 590788*

Swimming (term time), Tuesdays at Bradford

Contact: *Eva or Trish*

Wednesdays, 10.30 Huddersfield Sports Centre

Contact: *Helen 01484 602100*

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International Day of Peace "Hear the Children" Day is set for 19th September

To get involved contact:

**'Peace one day', 54 Romsey Road,
Lyndhurst, Hampshire SO43 7AR**

or visit: www.peaceoneday.org

The '**UK Home Education Support**' e-mail list provides mutual support for UK-based home educators and those interested in home education, to allow the sharing of knowledge and experience between established and prospective home educators and providing a forum for free discussion of home education issues. **E-mail UK-HOME-ED-REQUEST@LISTSERV.AOL.COM** for info.

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**Hall Lodge, Biddenden Rd, Headcorn,
Ashford, Kent, TN27 9JD.**

Free electronic rtf. copy, e-mail me

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Chris Harper, Badgers Holt, Birchwood, Storridge, Malvern Worcs WR13 5HA
Tel: 01886 884740

(If you have had your publications list for a while ring Chris to check availability of the item you want before ordering.)

Contact with LEA

If you need information to help in dealing with your LEA ring your Local Contact or any council member.

Small Jobs

If you have a little time to help EO contact
Angela Smith 01434 322372

Useful Contacts

Single Parent Family Contact: Sarah Martin, Lammis, 34 Cowslip Drive, Little Thetford, Ely, Cambs CB6 3JD

Special Needs: Christine Waterman
85 Elfrida Road, Watford, Herts WD1 8AT
Tel: 01923 464773

School Phobia: Geraldine Adams
Tel: 0171 263 4922

Autonomous Education Support and Advice (acting): Sammy and Nick Vidal-Hall, Home Croft, Brownston St, Modbury, Devon PL21 0QR. Tel: 01548 830 716

GCSE Contact: Wendy Pleded
Tel: 01865 514973

College Contact: Kathy Chilton
Tel: 01969 623707

EO Stalls: Lucy Charlton
2, Wistow Road, Newton Harcourt, Leics
LE8 0FT Tel: 0116 2592118

Research Contact: (vacant)

Chair: (vacant)

Vice Chair: Eleanor Stapleton
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N9 9LU Tel: 0181 884 1368

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Local Contact Coordinator: Isobel Bogucki
20 Rusper Road, Horsham, West Sussex
RH12 4BD Tel: 01403 261178

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Council Members

If you have a problem contact your nearest council member:

Geraldine Adams (North London)
Christine Adey (Dorset)
Jude Ashley-Walker (Isle of Wight)
Pam Bellinger (Northants)
Isobel Bogucki (West Sussex)
Lynda Hitchman (Berkshire)
Jill Fisher (Leics)
Sue Hutchin (Kent)
Priscilla Park-Weir (Surrey)
Gary Podmore (Yorks)
Eleanor Stapleton (London-North)
Jenny Stevens (West Sussex)
Anne Wade (London Middx)
Bruce Wallace (Highlands)
Janet Wilkinson (Cambs)
Beverly 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
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<<http://www.education-otherwise.org>>

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