

education otherwise



October 2000

No. 136

**SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE DECEMBER ISSUE OF THE
EDUCATION OTHERWISE NEWSLETTER TO THE FOLLOWING EDITORS:**

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LOCAL NEWS (vacant)

HOME EDUCATION NEWS

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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 DECEMBER ISSUE IS 1ST NOVEMBER 2000

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DATABASE SECRETARY TO CHECK IF YOU ARE ON THE DATABASE.**

From the Editors...

THANK YOU for all the contributions, letters and articles sent for this issue, and please keep sending them! October's issue covers news on Education Otherwise' work with the DfEE, including Special Educational Needs. A new feature is Robert Krampf's Experiment of the Week, more of which can be found on the internet. The Archives takes a fascinating look at the origins of EO and the first few Newsletters, recalling the words of the organisation's founder, Dick Kitto. EO's membership recently reached 3,000 families and is climbing. Thousands of families have been members over the last 23 years and much work has been done by volunteers. As the oldest and largest UK home education organisation, a growing membership is healthy and benefits everyone. If you can, please remember to renew your membership – and let's make it 4,000 soon!

Learning a foreign language is the subject for the Special Section. Families often like to include learning a language in their weekly activities, learning with their children where necessary. Read about how some do it. You'll find more book reviews and resources this month, which continue to cover a wide range of available materials. If you've used something good lately, do write to Sally about it. There's good news for home educating families about research in Home Education in the News, while the story of the Scottish Consumer Council's report on home education and LEAs continues. Estimates of numbers of children being home-educated in the UK vary between newspapers from 50,000 to 150,000. Perhaps we should keep them guessing!

The new EO Internet Discussion List is described in EO Business, and there are adverts for books, T shirts, car stickers and a regional gathering in Cumbria. The Problem Page has expanded this month to accommodate all contributions; our parents and in-laws are perhaps an area that generates discussion? If you have any special practical ideas for children for the Christmas festive activities, perhaps cookery, art or music, write to Christine to include them in the December issue. And if you would like to send a photograph for the front cover, or to edit the Special Section or Children's pages, please phone for information.

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Please write in: December issue's Special Section is **Ideas and materials for children's writing**. Do you have a child who is reluctant to write? Have you found ways of encouraging writing? Has your child written very little but learnt how to write anyway? Write to Sue Davis (address opposite)

Start thinking: February issue's Special Section will be **What about Science?** (Wendri Heywood)

Special Section: Learning a Foreign Language

Having taught French in schools in the past and as a GCSE examiner, I was keen to introduce French to my children at an early age. For a long time there has been evidence to suggest that children benefit from starting early, and in France, for example, English lessons can start at the age of six. Our children's first real exposure to French was on a camping holiday in France when they were eight (Naomi), six (Sebastian) and two (Carl). Naomi had done some French from *Arc en Ciel Book 1* prior to that, which is a standard French course for eleven year-olds in school. It was fairly light-weight and easy-going, as early courses often are, so she had not struggled with it at all and found listening to the accompanying tapes and songs interesting. (There is little emphasis on writing in the early stages of language learning.) While in France, I scoured the shops for children's song cassettes, which at the time, were scarce compared with the wealth of tapes available here. I found a few, which we played endlessly in the car for months.

I have always been keen on the idea of listening to and learning songs, since they are an excellent way of practising pronunciation and preparing for later fluency. A language like French involves the use of different parts of the mouth from English, and so, rather like physical training for a sport, practising the use of the different facial muscles can encourage good pronunciation. It's like two and three year-olds learning nursery rhymes; they may not understand them, but they are enjoyable, they teach underlying rhythm, and they are repeated often without being boring.

While Naomi had learned to read (in English) early, Sebastian didn't take off until he was 10½. He was interested in very little formal learning in any language, so I didn't introduce him to *Arc en Ciel*. I started teaching French to Naomi and two home-educated friends on a weekly basis when she was about ten. We did this for two years, in which time they all learned a lot, and Immy, who was older, also took French at college and passed her GCSE. Rosie and Naomi reached a sound position, ready to tackle GCSE level.

I did almost no French with Naomi for two years after that. We tried from time to time, but doing it with just the two of us didn't work well; Naomi preferred company. When she started school at 14½, going straight into the first year of GCSEs, I wondered how she would cope with French. She adjusted quickly and her teacher commented on her good accent. The school is predicting Naomi will do very well next year.

I have recently started teaching Sebastian (now 13) and a home-educated friend French once a week. Their mothers were keener to give this a try than they were, but there was no out-right arm-twisting. After a few lessons of basic vocabulary building (neither had learnt much French before), I have tried a GCSE Foundation Course, *Francoscope* (David Sprake, OUP). Despite a bit of lounging about and good-natured moaning, they occasionally forget themselves and look quite interested. I keep written French to a minimum, which suits them both.

Some good Language Courses

In the EO Newsletter by Christopher Shute, who suggested that it was important to learn a language as a baby would learn the language of its parents. So when my 7 year-old said she wanted to learn Russian and Italian, I got tapes of the language for her to listen to. We used Usbourne books First Thousand Words series, which have been used a lot by all my children. The interest in these languages did not last more than a year.

At about the age of 11, my daughter wanted to learn French. We got an excellent Linguaphone video course in French. It was easy to follow and my youngest child, about 18 months at the time, was saying "Bonjour". My other children also picked up phrases and were interested in counting in French. We followed school French programmes on the BBC.

Since then, my daughter has considered a career in the police force. Minimum qualifications include a language. She decided not to study French anymore. We have tried various courses in German and Norwegian, before she settled on German. The best course we found in German was An Accelerated Learning Course. It prescribes relaxation, breathing exercises before learning in a relaxed way. It is a combination of tapes, games and mind maps as well as the usual text and translations. It was much easier to learn in this way, rather than worrying about grammar and vocabulary lists.

Fiona Chaff, Hillhead, Ollaberry, Shetland ZE2 9RT

Editor's note – the combination of relaxation and foreign language learning was pioneered by Michel Thomas, whose learning packages are available for approximately £70. The Daily Telegraph reported on these and other learning techniques in July this year.

High-tech methods not always the best?

In learning a foreign language, I went to a school with headphones, tapes of French and very modern facilities for learning, but learnt more from my Mum going to French evening classes and saying in French "please shut the door," "lay the table," etc. When working as a waitress as a teenager, I surprised myself answering a French family in French, saying "good morning," and something like, "have a good day."

I found travelling abroad, as a nanny to a cook in the South of France, improved my French, when she wouldn't let me eat until I said it in French. I soon learnt! I think in School, teenagers are under pressure to learn. My daughter cant learn French until she is competent in German. My home-educated son will learn when he's ready, and that suits me.

Theresa Mercer, 23 Northgreen, Bullbrook, Bracknell, Berks, RG12 2NY

Foreign languages: a family project

I have four sons, aged 12, 10, 8 and nearly 6. The two eldest are learning German, the third French and the youngest, Spanish! I must confess at the outset to having done A-level French and German, nearly thirty years ago, and O-level Latin before that, but have never used foreign languages professionally.

Jethro (12) began German about 3 years ago. Originally we began with Usborne books (*Learn German/German for Beginners*). Later we were given the name and number of the head of languages at the local comprehensive school. After a visit to the school, during which she generously showed us her resources, we worked through book 1 of *Projekt Deutsch*. After that I contacted the teacher again and we are still working through part 2 of the course. Silas (10) is working through part 1.

Our general approach is that I have a lesson with each boy individually once a week for maybe 30-40 minutes, sometimes longer. Then they also do some work of their own, e.g. exercises in a workbook, once a week. In addition, we have videoed various language programmes, and I encourage them to watch these as often as possible. This they have done with considerable enthusiasm. A particular favourite has been *Hallo aus Berlin*, but they also watch *Globo* and a game show programme called *Top!* (both also done in French and Spanish). I would say that these videos are the crucial resource, because it is important to hear real foreigners speaking their language, and they can be watched over and over. I find that the boys do relate what they have heard on the videos to what comes up in the course. I emphasised to them the need for repetition: the more they watch and listen to the video, the more they will understand. Gradually more and more works become recognisable. In fact all the boys tend to watch each other's videos. Originally Silas was learning Spanish, but as a result of watching the German videos, decided German was easier and so gave up Spanish. When one of the boys say, "What can I do?", we often say, "Watch your German/French video". Sometimes they do.

It is important with language learning to try and do some every day in some form or other, even if for only five minutes, and to relate it to real life. I try to use languages at the dinner table, for example, and we also keep a dictionary in the kitchen to help in this. For a while we also had an erasable question/answer session going on the wall at the top of the stairs, while I would leave them a question to answer, often requiring the use of a dictionary (by me as well as them)!

I believe it is important to use as many resources as possible, which can also help to keep up the interest. For example, we have a crossword book in German, alphabet books, simple children's story books, picture dictionaries, a card game with accompanying cassette in French, and so on. Isaac (8) is following the Ecole Allouette course for French, which involves colouring in pictures, as well as simple writing and listening to the cassette. He also watches BBC videos (*Quinze Minutes Plus, Le Club, Top! And Salut Serge*).

Another way to encourage and broaden the interest is to keep a scrapbook of items from the relevant country, such as stamps, coins, chocolate wrappers, pictures from tourist brochures etc. We also borrowed books from the library on the relevant country and looked at them together. Any opportunity can be taken to relate language resources to the children's other interests. When Silas was learning Spanish, he made some *turrón*, as he enjoys cooking. Jethro and I tried translating a piece from the Guardian education supplement about problems with the German national football team, as he enjoys football and Euro 2000 was approaching.

Ethan, our youngest, is learning Spanish slowly and informally, although, taking a cue from his brothers, likes to have a sit down "lesson" with me now and then. Sometimes he is given a list of simple words to translate by someone outside the family, and as we do this together, he is learning how to use the dictionary. When I go to work each day, he calls "*Hasta luego*", and our goodnight kiss is always accompanied by, "*Buenos noches*"!

If you, as a parent, are not familiar with a foreign language, you can learn together with your child. This is what I was doing when Silas wanted to learn Spanish, although it must be admitted that I was at an advantage with my experience of French and Latin. I would argue that I do not teach anyway; rather I facilitate, encourage, inspire and enthuse. The effort, ultimately, has to come from the learner. It is rarely easy. I work full-time, and so my "lessons" are in the evenings, when I am tired (and sometimes the boys too). Sometimes they lack confidence, which stifles their ability to learn. And I am sometimes guilty of expecting too much of them, or pushing them too hard. Above all, the language learning, like anything else, must be enjoyable to be valuable. And, like all other skills, it must be practised regularly, if one is to be good at it. This is where, for me, lies the great value of the videos. The boys enjoy watching them, can relate to them and are hearing the language spoken by native speakers.

David Urwin, Bellevue, Llanboidy, Whitland, Carmarthenshire, SA34 0HB

General suggestions for language learning:

- Listen to the language (via videos and cassettes) as much as possible, even if you don't understand them. You absorb more than you may think. After all, babies and young children don't understand all that their parents say, but gradually they learn the language from them.
- Scour discount bookshops for resources eg. cheap dictionaries, workbooks, odd tapes etc.
- Relate the language to real life eg. table talk, greetings, shopping, numbers etc.
- Follow a specific course to give some structure, but then use as many additional resources as possible.

David Urwin

A Second Language from Birth

I was brought up in a tri-lingual environment in Hong Kong and went to multi-cultural schools in Hong Kong and Singapore. Having lived in London for the last 10 years, I am often amazed to see that many people here know so little about other cultures and languages. Here in south-east London, the situation is even worse. There are a lot of racial prejudices. In streets and supermarkets, I have had young children shouting racial insults at me, simply because I have an Oriental face. Often, kids come up to me and make a mockery of ordering food at a Chinese takeaway, thinking it is very funny. Personally, I think that if these kinds had been taught foreign languages and cultures at an earlier age, a lot of these racial prejudices would have been avoided.

When my only child, Leon, was born 6 years ago, I decided that he should be given the opportunity to become multi-lingual too. As I speak Cantonese, Mandarin, French and English, I wondered for a while which languages I should teach him. I tried Cantonese and French when he was a baby, up to the age of one. Then I realised that French would have to take precedence over Cantonese because I have very few Cantonese-speaking friends around me and even when we meet up, we tend to speak English. Although my family is still in Hong Kong, I can't afford to take him on trips there very often. Then I met a French-speaking family, who were home-educating their little girl (same age as Leon). So between the ages of 3 and 4, Leon met up with his little girl friend every morning to learn together – arts and crafts, gardening, games, science projects – all done in French.

Sadly, when Leon was almost 5, this arrangement came to an end, as the family had to move back to Luxembourg. I did not want Leon to lose his French, which by then was fairly fluent and a lifetime ahead of his peers in the UK. Having lived in Paris myself, I speak reasonably good French, though far from perfect. So I decided that I would teach him French at home.

I believe that since language is a tool for communication, when you learn a language, you need to use it for meaningful conversations on a regular basis in order to speak it well. Now that I am home-educating Leon, I speak to him in French in the morning and English in the afternoon. I also make sure that he has a good grasp of basic Chinese by visiting Chinatown and our local Chinese shops once a week.

As for learning materials, as Leon is pretty fluent in French, most of the French learning materials available in the UK are not really relevant, as they rely too much on translation. However, I found the TV series, *Le Club* (BBC) very helpful, and Leon really enjoyed it when he was 4. *Le Club* manages to teach practical basic French without using a single word of English. Though officially meant for students in early secondary school years, it is also very accessible to young

children, as the series shows a lot of primary school children living in Boulogne talking about their everyday life.

Nowadays I use mainly *livrets* and *cahiers* with Leon. These are course books and work books used in French primary schools. The Hachette series called *J'apprends à lire* is very interesting and Leon is learning a lot. This comprises two textbooks and two workbooks each year. It takes a friendly young wolf cub as its main character, encouraging children to learn to read French. These books are available in all bookshops in Calais and Boulogne.

My main problem now is finding other children who have roughly the same level of French as Leon. *Le Club Français* will not be appropriate for him as the French taught there is too basic. It would be nice if he could meet up with some French-speaking children regularly to do things together, although he has friends in France.

As far as home-educating Leon is concerned, all my Chinese friends think I am out of my mind. In case you don't know, most Chinese kids here are under a lot of pressure from their parents to "succeed", and you are not deemed to have made it unless you pass your exams with lots of A grades and become a middle-class professional, like a solicitor or accountant. I often feel like an alien among the Chinese people I know here because of my different priorities and views on how I should bring up my child. For me, it really doesn't matter whether Leon makes it to Oxford or Cambridge; I just want him to be happy and "enlightened".

I would be very interested to meet up with other home-educated families with children about Leon's age, who are learning French or Cantonese, so maybe we could get together from time to time to do things in French/Cantonese.

Rita Lai-Chu Byford, 23 Darenth Road, Welling, Kent DA16 3EG

Brief ideas ...

Regarding language studies, we have taken advantage of the many tourist attractions nearby that often have plaques, or even recordings, in French and German. This is a fun, interdisciplinary and flexible home-schooling way!

James and Christine Porter, Sterling

Leigh Languages is in Buckhurst Hill, Essex (borders of London/Essex) and is run by a retired headmistress in a small community centre. They teach almost every language at every age and level, up to AS, and you can do the exams when ready. Each course costs between £32 & £42 per 10 week term. Laura started French there last September and will be beginning Spanish also from this September.

Jackie Goldsworthy, London (020 8529 8962)

Book Reviews and Resources

Five Days of the Ghost by William Bell

Daniel reviewed this. Not known for his enthusiasm, he nonetheless found it 'interesting' and 'fascinating'. The story involves a young girl's reluctance to accept the death of her twin brother. My only caveat is that the parents are disposed of, albeit temporarily, so that Karen can deal with her problem on her own terms. That said, the book has pace, direction and a positive, if not conventionally happy, conclusion. Mustn't give too much away except to say that it deals with issues we all too often fail to help our own children with. We'd buy it.

Gerry O'Donnell and Daniel (14)

£4.99 ISBN 0 86315 315 1. Floris Books (0131 337 2372) (part of new Flyways series)

The Boy and the Dog Who Walked to the Moon by Nicholas Cross

This is a lovely story about a boy called Thomas who made friends with Don Alfonso, a dog and their journey from Thomas's hut to the Moon. They go up a mountain, down a well, across a lake, through a forest and finally reach a drawbridge to the moon. They meet different, interesting characters along the way. I loved this story because of the bright shining moon and the lovely lake. I also liked Thomas and the dog. It is a story I will read again.

Lucy Pope (7)

£4.99 ISBN 0 86315 314 3. Floris Books (0131 337 2372) (part of new Flyways series)

The Emperor's Egg by Martin Jenkins

This book tells you about Emperor penguins. The illustrations appealed to Sophie, but the text is aimed at older children and so it was enjoyed by Lucy who said "I like it because of the chick". It is a factual book done in a clever way that should appeal to children around 7 or so.

Anne Pope with Lucy (7) and Sophie (4)

£9.99 (hardback) ISBN 0 7445 6237 6. Published by Walker Books (020 7793 0909)

Weslandia by Paul Fleischmann

Wesley doesn't like most of the things his peers like and is tormented for it. During the summer holidays he decides to create his own civilisation, starting with allowing his garden to be taken over by an extraordinary plant, which becomes his staple food crop, as well as almost everything he needs for his civilisation. This picture book with amusing and imaginative text was very popular with Kim. The illustrations are bright and original with great 'creature' details. Hazel is a little too old for it but liked the book anyway.

It has an interesting ending, which Kim described as "nice". I'm not sure what I made of it, but I definitely recommend it, and see what your family thinks!

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

£4.99 (hardback) ISBN 0 7445 7735 7. Walker Books Ltd (020 7793 0909)

The Story of Flynn The Stickleback

by Richard Davids

This story is just what it says - the life story of an adventurous stickleback from his first days in the egg sac protected by his father, until he too becomes a father. There is a wealth of detail about life under water, particularly the dangers that the stickleback faces during its journeys, many of which are caused by people and their thoughtless or even criminal behaviour. Even those humans that are interested in wildlife cause problems for Flynn when he is caught and kept in an aquarium. Daniel found it an interesting story, slightly reminiscent of *Tarka the Otter*. In general I think it would mainly appeal to those children already interested in wildlife and the wider issues of environmental concerns. It is well written and largely avoids the cliches so common in books of this genre.

Gerry O'Donnell and Daniel (14)

£12.95 (hardback) ISBN 1 85776 428 5. The Book Guild (01273 472534) www.bookguild.co.uk

How Green Was My Mouse by Dick King-Smith

Mouse breeding, taxidermy and love interest are the central themes, the first two being new ideas for Natasha. Taxidermy and the bizarre set-up form the main humour of this novel. Charlie Muffin has a freezer full of dead animals and a house full of mistakes, such as a hen with webbed feet. If the idea of stuffed animals is not to one's taste, though, the humour falls flat. The happy green mouse on the cover of the 1999 Puffin edition gave us the impression of an appealing story (especially as the resume on the back cover omits any reference to taxidermy). We did not enjoy the story much although the possibility of Charlie Muffin and Merry Day getting married kept Natasha's interest going. This story would probably be more suitable for a slightly older reader (it is actually recommended for 7 - 9 year olds). Not only were the themes a bit advanced but the vocabulary was also challenging. A better choice for a cute mouse story would be one of our favourite animal stories, also by Dick King Smith, *Happy Mouseday*.

Clare Crane and Natasha (5)

Book only £3.99 ISBN 0-140-38807-9; book and tape (read by Nigel Lambert) £7.99 ISBN 0 7540 7107 3; cassette only £3.99 ISBN 0 7540 7089 1 Chivers Press Ltd (Cavalcade programme) (01225 335336) www.chivers.co.uk

Mabel Dancing by Amy Hest

Mabel is a little girl who lives in an enormous house with a ballroom and calls her parents 'Mama' and 'Papa', all of which we found a little difficult to relate to. Mabel is put to bed on the night of the dancing party and her parents go downstairs to dance. Left with only Curly Dog for company, Mabel sensibly slips downstairs and joins in, to the delight of the guests and her parents. However, they still take her back to bed where she drifts off to sleep again to the rhythm of the music. The dreamy, floaty pictures go well with the dreamy, one-two-three, one-two-three dance rhythms repeated throughout the story. Comments from the girls - Stephanie queried "Why is she supposed to be in bed when there's a party going on?" and Claudia said "I don't like the one-two-three stuff - it's trying to be a poem". The final comment was from Lucy who is in the age group the book is aimed at "I like it. Read it again."

Vivien Hughes with Stephanie (8), Claudia (7) & Lucy (3)
£9.99 (hardback) ISBN 9 780744 556629 Walker Books Ltd (020 7793 0909)

Marianne Dreams by Catherine Storr

Marianne is confined to bed for a long period due to illness. She is angry, bored and powerless to change her situation. She finds a 'special' pencil and draws a house. To her amazement (and ours) she discovers that when she dreams she is transported into the house, so vividly that sometimes she isn't sure which 'life' is real - this continues - whatever she adds to the picture also exists/happens in her dreams - and has uncanny parallels with her waking life. Hazel liked the idea of the story but thought there was too much 'just talking' - also parts of it are eerie and menacing. I imagine it would best suit 9-12 year olds - then again I'm 41 and thought it a brilliant book. It described Marianne's feelings so sympathetically and the ending is perfect. It was filmed in 1990 as *'The Paper House'*.

Sally Jarvis with Hazel (8)
£4.99 ISBN 0 571 20212 8. Faber & Faber Ltd (020 7465 7573)

The Enormous Turnip

This was an engaging story which Rachel immediately took to and wanted repeated again and again. After a few plays of the tape, Rachel began to prefer to read the story herself and soon identified some of the words that she had previously not seen. To be honest, the benefit of having the story read by a tape machine rather than a human being was somewhat of a mystery, as more often than not Rachel demanded a parental presence anyway. If it is designed to give a child independence in terms of them being able to have it read to themselves whenever they wanted to,

then it simply becomes another pacifier in the same way as a TV. I think that the actual benefit of taped literature lies with books for older children or with more engaging stories in the same way as storytelling was used on the radio for many years to entertain families. For this level of reading there is no substitute for having the story read in a way that words can be repeated, or spelt out with your child as you progress rather than risk them being left behind in the story telling process. Overall we liked the book but felt that the extra cost of the tape was not justifiable unless it was to be used for car journeys (unlikely!).

Dave Shenton with Rachel (5)
£3.99 ISBN 0 7214 7408 Read It Yourself Level 1, (020 8757 4000) www.penguin.co.uk

The Crunchy Munching Caterpillar

by Sheridan Cain & Jack Tickle

This story is about a caterpillar who wishes it could fly. Sophie says "I like this story". For me, it seemed to be a cross between two other stories we know and so did not come across as very original. We liked the illustrations and I liked the way it informs young children in a very simple way what happens to caterpillars.

Anne Pope with Sophie (4)
£8.99 (hardback) ISBN 1 85430 640 5. Little Tiger Press (A & C Black) (01480 212666)

How to be Brilliant at Living Things

by Colin Hughes and Winnie Wade.

Basically this is 42 pages of worksheet style material all based on understanding how humans, plants and other living things operate and relate to their surroundings and to each other. It is interspersed with experiments to do and questions to think about. 6 pages should be photocopied because they need to be cut up. It is wonderfully set out in black and white with no frill extras to make it "more exciting", just the basic down to earth facts. We found it most helpful because we had covered a lot of the stuff already and going through this just helped to confirm what we'd already learnt and add to anything we had not covered fully. It does human reproduction very simply with a little diagram of male and female bits and we managed to cover this subject quite nicely using the proper names without anyone (me) getting embarrassed (done over breakfast, of course!). I would recommend it because it is not too 'schooly' and I feel could be done by any age group who has not covered these topics fully. There are loads of other "How to be Brilliant at" titles covering science, maths, English, geography and history.

Diane Cromie with Ben (9) and Tabitha (6)
£11.95 ISBN 1 897675 66 6. Brilliant Publications, (01525 222844) www.brilliantpublications.co.uk

Mary, Juma and Simba the Dog

This is the story of a family in Kenya. The story opens with "Mary and Juma loved their puppy Simba, but he was always in trouble. Early on Saturday morning he stuck his nose in a pot of *ugali*". The italics are a clue that you need to refer to the glossary at the back to learn that *ugali* is maize flour and water mashed together. It is cooked outside over a wood fire. Juma and Mary eat *ugali* every day with meat, fish or vegetables. We go on to learn that we shouldn't be so quick to blame the pesky puppy - watch out for the mischievous *ekagonkoru bird*. The Glossary at the back of these books were our favourite part. They tell you the meaning of all the unusual words to give you a real understanding of this family's life. It even tells you how to count to five in Swahili and shows you the menu at Mr Amokoya's video cafe.

Janet Wilkinson with Nicola (10 and Samantha) (9)
£17.25 from Action Aid Education (part of the overseas development agency Action Aid). (01460 23 8000) www.actionaid.org

Footprints in the Forest: a Chembakolli Story

This is for slightly more advanced readers and tells the story of Kelu, a young girl in Chembakolli near the Nilgiri Hills and her exciting and sometimes scary journey through the forest to collect flowers for her village festival. The glossary also gives details of words we find in the story relating to everyday life. Also there is an extensive list of the animals that Kelu meets on her way with descriptions of their habitat and life-cycles. There is also a map of Africa showing the area in which the story is set.

Janet Wilkinson with Nicola (10 and Samantha) (9)
£17.25 from Action Aid Education (part of the overseas development agency Action Aid). (01460 23 8000) www.actionaid.org

Getting Started in Home Education

by Mary Ann Rose and Paul Stanbrock

Had we read this book before we pulled our children out of school we may have got cold feet and left them where they were. The truism that you can have too much information to make an effective decision applies here. We found this book very useful for families who, like us, have jumped blind-folded into the abyss and would now like to know whether they're heading precipitously towards the rocks or soaring from the stars and need good advice on possible course changes. It fully explains the legal position and advises, sensibly, on how to deal positively, but firmly with the LEA. It is a good source of useful tips and has a fairly comprehensive guide to organisations, etc that can help 'home educators'. It also empathises total commitment and accepting less income and un-

tidy homes. So, would I recommend it to parents about to jump - for believe me it often appears a brave and foolhardy decision? Probably not. Would I recommend it after the decision is taken? Yes, without hesitation.

Gerry O'Donnell
£17.50 ISBN 1 871526 42 6 from Education Now Books, 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham NG9 3FQ

Forestia Junior CD ROM for PC and Macintosh

All the magic of a colourful forest with animated animals, in glorious 3D. Beautifully produced with 16 different activities (with increasing difficulty levels) involving music, puzzles and painting. Venture from underground, explore an ant hill and up through the canopy to the tree tops in the midst of the branches. This title was the 'EuroPrix Overall Winner' and winner in the category 'First Steps in Multimedia' as 'the most excellent example of children's software uniquely combining learning by discovery with immediacy of the interactive experience.' A 32 page activity book accompanies the programme.

£19.99 from Wavehill Ltd, (020 8305 0456) www.mediac.co.uk

Complete Reader Rabbit Learn to Read System (for 3 - 7 year olds)

This is a new step-by-step approach to help build children's early reading skills (letters, sounds, words, then sentences). The system comprises software (Windows 95/98 or Macintosh), flashcards, 2 story work books and a parents guide. It can be customised to suit children of different ages and reading abilities. It combines traditional teaching methods with new technology very well. Keith says "I like this very much. The main story on the CD is a fair-ground adventure where a wish made by a mouse goes wrong and all the writing disappears from the world. The mouse, helped by Reading Rabbit and the incredible performing hamsters lead you all through the games. There is lots of singing and good tunes. It is a magical world of A-Z but not in order and when you have found all the letters - this takes a long time - the wish can be un-done and the writing all comes back again. It helped me to practice my reading well. There is a good 'Talking Book' CD too about the hare and the tortoise which we have read before. I also like the two books which have lots of short stories in that I found quite interesting and not too hard to read."

It is certainly not cheap but if you are keen on using a reading scheme and you have a computer then this may be a good investment as it is such a complete package.

Sally Hall with Keith (6)
£49.99 from software retailers. Mattel Interactive (01293 651 710) www.mattelinteractive.co.uk

Arthur's Thinking Games CD ROM for PC and Macintosh

I don't know whether it's simply that expectations are different in the UK, but this program seemed to be less involving than it should have been and relied on animations and special effects to make any impact at all. Initially you are confronted with Arthur and a group of his friends, and you have to choose a character to play with. No additional levels, no increased difficulty etc. On a technical point, it's worth checking CD's in the shop if possible. A good indication of a poor purchase is a CD which is only partly used for the game (total files on this one came to less than half the CD volume) and which is multi-platform (Windows 3.x, 95, 98, Mac etc.) as this usually means a separate version for each! Animations and video take up enormous amounts of space, so as a general rule, the whizzier the graphics, the less involving the content. I'm afraid that in this case the content was soon used up and Rachel has yet to ask for the CD to be used since! 4/10 - could try harder!

Dave Shenton with Rachel (5)

£19.99 from software retailers. *Mattel Interactive*. (01293 651 710) www.mattelinteractive.co.uk

Wild Western Town CD ROM for Windows PC (ages 3-7)

The basic premise of moving about a virtual space seeking out hidden clues and rewards is not a new one but quite likely one not experienced by this particular target audience. The virtual space in question here is Wild Western town complete with jail, stage coaches, bank, general store, boot hill and saloon (tastefully described as Pepe's piano room). The task for the youngster, enrolled as the town's deputy, is to locate the 9 bars of gold that have been stolen from the bank and hidden by the bad guy, Bandit Bob. Along the way there are plenty of encounters with the local characters and a selection of diversions with a vaguely cowboy theme. It is all very good clean fun for the age range aimed at. Each scene has a hat full of surprises and almost every click on the screen raises a whoop of joy or surprise.

The activities themselves are possibly a bit light weight but they do blend in well with the game itself and a nice touch is the results of designing a wanted poster that turns up on the wall of the Sheriff's office. The hiding places for the stolen gold bars are imaginative and obscure enough to keep young heads directed at the challenge - at least for the first couple of goes anyway, as after this the likely hiding places are all known and it only takes a few seconds of rapid mouse movement to unearth the gold. For the novice computer user then fun packed action games such as

this one are undoubtedly an excellent introduction to point, click, move and explore. Other than that it should be viewed only for its excellent fun (lots of laughter while playing) with a fair shelf life.

Tricia (8) and Thomas (4) Onions (with some assistance from Dad)

£19.99 from software retailers. *Mattel Interactive*. (01293 651 710) www.mattelinteractive.co.uk

Orly Draws a Story CD ROM for Windows

We like this. Orly is a girl from Jamaica who explains all about what you have to do and helps you when you play. You can: write a story, draw on the doodle pad and listen to Orly tell stories which you can draw pictures for. There are four different stories to listen to and draw pictures for. They are: 'The Ugly Troll People', 'The Strange Princess', 'Lancelot the Bug Eater' and 'One Big Wish'. We wrote a story about a beaver called Taal. Our favourite bit is drawing pictures on the doodle pad. We have another CD called *Zoombinies* which is by the same company. It is very good as well as Orly. Overall we think this a good CD and we enjoy using it but it is more for Molly than Emma.

Emma (10) and Molly (7) Whitehall

£19.99 from software retailers. *Mattel Interactive*. (01293 651 710) www.mattelinteractive.co.uk

TITLES RECOMMENDED BY EO'ers

The Butterfly Lion by Michael Morpurgo

Bertie manages to rescue an orphaned white lion cub whilst living in Africa. They are inseparable until Bertie is sent to boarding school in England and the lion is sold to a circus. He vows he will find it again. Whilst in England he runs away from the school and meets an old lady. She has a chalk lion engraved on her hillside which becomes blue when the butterflies settle on it to feed on the chalk. Once started the book proved difficult to put down (always a good sign of a great story!) and it got better and better with an intriguing twist at the end! Quite a tear jerker too! We were not surprised it was a winner of the Smarties Prize and Writers' Guild Award.

Sally Hall with Keith (6)

£3.99 ISBN 0 00 675103 2. *Collins Children's Books*

Keep sending in your favourite titles and or let me know if you would like to review new books or software. Write to me, Sally Hall, at Nant-y-Garreg Farm, Saron, Llandysul, Carmarthen SA44 5EJ or e-mail admin@aecb.net

Home Education in the News

HOME NEWS

Just before the onset of the new school year, and amidst handwringing over boys slipping even further behind in their exams and the dwindling number of teachers to teach them, the media seized on one education-related story with an genuine feelgood factor. This was Paula Rothermel's groundbreaking research into how home-educated children are outstripping their schoolmates in standard government tests. She proves that this is one form of education in which boys and working-class children are flourishing and it has nothing to do with how many terms there are or the requisite number of maths teachers. Now, do we need to keep explaining that they are happy and sociable too?

Children taught at home learn more

Youngsters of all social classes do better if they avoid school, study discovers

Children taught at home significantly outperform their contemporaries who go to school, the first comparative study has found. It discovered that home-educated children of working-class parents achieved considerably higher marks in tests than the children of professional, middle-class parents and that gender differences in exam results disappear among home-taught children.

The study, to be published by the University of Durham in the autumn, will support a call for the Government to introduce legislation to help the growing army of parents who are choosing to remove their children from schools.

The numbers of home-educated children in Britain has grown from practically none 20 years ago to about 150,000 today - around 1 per cent of the school age population. By the end of the decade, the figure is expected to have tripled. Home education has won so much support in Scotland that more than 200 campaigners from across Britain are to march to the Scottish Parliament next month to demand a relaxation in legislation which makes it harder for parents to

educate their children at home in Scotland than in England and Wales.

'Home-educated children do better in conventional terms and in every other way too,' said Paula Rothermel, a lecturer in learning in early childhood at the University of Durham, who spent three years conducting the survey. She said: 'This study is the first evidence we have proving that home education is a huge benefit to large numbers of children. Society just assumes that school is best but because there have never been any comparative studies before this one, the assumption is baseless.'

Rothermel questioned 100 home-educating families chosen randomly across the UK, conducting face-to-face interviews and detailed appraisals of their children's academic progress, in line with recognised Government tests. She found that 65 per cent of home-educated children scored more than 75 per cent in a general mathematics and literacy test, compared to a national figure of only 5.1 per cent. The average national score for school-educated pupils in the same test was 45 per cent, while that of the home-educated children was 81 per cent. Rothermel said: 'The improved exam results could be down to the sheer quantity of parental attention and the sense of long-term security that gives them... It could also be down to the fact that families who home educate from birth had worked with their children from the word go and without the disruptive transition at an early age to the very different environment of school.' Rothermel found that the children of working-class, poorly-educated parents significantly outperformed their middle-class contemporaries. While the five- to six-year old children of professional parents scored only 55.2 per cent in the test, children far lower down the social scale scored 71 per cent. Rothermel said: 'This was really a staggering finding, but better-educated parents are probably more laid back than poorly-educated parents and so are less likely to push their children.'

Alison Preuss, a mother of three, has been home teaching for six years and is director of Schoolhouse, a Scottish support group for

Home Education in the News

parents who have opted out of conventional schooling. She said: 'In school [children] have knowledge poured into them, while at home they're proactive in choosing what they learn. It's a better preparation for university because they are used to motivating themselves.

'Their social skills and general knowledge are more advanced because they're not restricted by the confines of a national curriculum. They can explore a huge variety of subjects, concentrating in depth on whichever ones capture their imagination.'

Useful links: For the author of the study:

www.btinternet.com/~rothermel

For the Scottish campaign:

www.welcome.to/schoolhouse

((c) Amelia Hill and The Observer, August 13, 2000; reprinted with permission)

Scotland

In the last issue of the newsletter Ann Samuel Till and Liz Alderdice wrote about the law affecting home educators in Scotland and how local authorities have been roundly criticized by the Scottish Consumer Council for their unacceptable harassment of home educating families. Reports in Scottish newspapers, TV and radio showed ordinary families who had negotiated the obstacles placed in their way by the local authorities and gone on to make a success of their right to home-educate. At present many of those families are campaigning for a clarification of the law to make that right unambiguous. This clipping from the Times Educational Supplement shows that the attitude of some of the local authorities remains entrenched, but many home educators in Scotland believe that the positive media profile, as well as the march on Scottish Parliament and ongoing discussions, will help to overcome such prejudice.

Councils bite back on home learning

The Scottish Consumer Council was accused by local authorities this week of producing a report on home education that is unhelpful, one-sided, unbalanced and flawed.

The council claimed authorities place barriers in

the way of parents exercising a legitimate right to educate children at home. This includes referring cases to children's panels on the grounds that pupils are being kept off school, giving out misleading information, insisting on routine checks and making unreasonable demands.

Graeme Millar, the council's chairman, commented: "Some authorities have a disgraceful 'we know what's best for you' attitude and some behave in ways that can only be described as unacceptable harassment of consumers."

But Danny McCafferty, education spokesperson for the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, said it was a pity the SCC had not taken the trouble to speak to Cosla officials. Mr McCafferty accused the council of elevating the rights of parents above those of children.

But he rather reinforced the report's contention that some authorities have a philosophical opposition to home education when he asked:

"If children are having difficulties at school, the important task is to sort out those difficulties. Is taking children out of school, and in so doing imposing a sort of social exclusion, the best way to prepare children for the pressures and problems they will face in adult life?"

Jackie Welsh, the consumer council's policy manager, retorted: "There is nothing in Mr McCafferty's remarks about being sorry for the heavy-handed way the authorities have treated parents. We agree that the interests of parents and children have got to be balanced, but parents are concerned about children's rights too."

The report suggests as many as 4,000 children are being educated at home, way above the official figure of 300. Ms Welsh says this was deduced from an estimate by the parent support group Education Otherwise that there were 50,000 such children in the UK.

The report is based on a postal survey completed by 27 of the 32 education authorities.

The consumer council urges councils to let parents see reports written about their children and make sure the information provided about home education is impartial. It also wants the Government to review the role of local

Home Education in the News

authorities in home education. The SCC hopes its findings and recommendations will influence the Scottish Executive as it prepares national guidelines on home education. Local authorities will be required to "have regard to" the guidelines, one of the provisions in the education Bill. (The Times Educational Supplement, 14 July 2000 (c) Times Supplements Limited; reprinted with permission)

HOME EDUCATION ABROAD

Supporters of home education in Japan are also convinced that the recent interested and friendly media approach will help them in getting the legal recognition to which they and their children feel entitled. At present all students who do not attend school, estimated by some at over 200,000, are labelled 'school-refusers' and many have to conceal their identities from the authorities for fear of legal action. But a new support group for home schoolers was formed in Tokyo last June and there are websites which aim to provide information and support to home-educating families. Supporters of home education have pointed to the U.N. declaration of April 1999, which states that all parents and children must retain the option of an alternative to the school system, as a demonstration of their right to choose to home educate. They also believe that Japan's constitution sanctions their right to choose the form and place of their children's education. But the legal situation in Japan still remains murky, and while some ministers have argued for the need to support learning in the home, other advisory groups are pressing for more legal obstacles to those who advocate 'truancy' and fines to be upheld. This is despite the depressing slew of Japanese news stories featuring suicides and violence among young people who often cite bullying and severe academic pressure as driving them to take desperate steps.

However, Japanese newspapers have demonstrated a positive attitude to the subject

of educational alternatives. Brian Covert from 'a multicultural homelearning family in Osaka, Japan', extracts from whose online homeschooling newsletter KnoK News were included in the last issue, is optimistic that a favourable media approach to home education, even though usually focussed on families in other countries, is helping those who are seeking a change to educational law in Japan.

Though Japanese homelearners don't have the strength in numbers (yet) of our counterparts in other countries, there is one advantage over the US or other countries that we do have: a news media in Japan that is not openly hostile to homelearning. In fact, at this early stage, the Japanese media seem to be giving a surprisingly fair shake in exploring homelearning and alternative schools as viable educational choices [...] There are many theories about why such neutral-to-positive coverage of homelearning is appearing in Japan right now, and all the theories probably have some merit. But I think the best answer is close to home: Lots of reporters and editors in the Japanese mass media have children, and they seem to be desperately searching for answers for their own families where school is concerned. If this personal searching in the Japanese mass media helps advance the cause of homelearning in Japan and brings the positive message of alternative education to a much wider audience, then long may this coverage continue. Things may change as time goes on and alternative education in Japan actually begins to threaten the foundations of the country's education/industrial complex (as it most certainly will). But for now, at least, we have a lot to be thankful for where Japanese media coverage of homelearning is concerned.

For more information, contact Brian Covert (email address: covert@wa2.so-net.ne.jp)

Please send education-related articles (with date and name of publication) to Ann Kennedy Smith, address on inside front cover

Living lessons

"Why are my legs getting cold?" asks the shivery voice of Tim from the chilly water of the paddling pool.

So starts one of our frequent impromptu explorations of the world we live in. "Well the water's evaporating and taking heat from your legs as it turns to water vapour," I answer.

Does that mean it's going to rain paddling pool water then?"

Four years old, home-educated and with a head full of mischief and wondering. Our conversations flit around like the butterflies that are dancing around the Buddleia behind our coal shed. Our "sperimens" erupt spontaneously out of our sharing time and space together.

"Have I got a skin like the hare?" [*which we ate last night*] "Never let me see you do that again!" [*Michael Rosen*] Dangling his head over the water and dripping his wet fringe over the inflatable pool ... "Rainbows in the water!" Allusions to so many stories, observations and conversations stretching back over the past years.

Our journey meanders quietly this afternoon, sharing the hot sun and rising sea breeze. The wheat field is burnishing behind our house and the grass lawn is looking tatty and browned from long games of short tennis and not enough rain.

And this qualifies as education? This counts as learning? Suddenly the questions strike me as not only rhetorical, but ridiculous. How can such an intrinsically human impulse as the drive to know be separated out from the warp and weft of conscious (and unconscious) living? Watching. Listening. Observing. Touching. Feeling. Understanding. They are inseparable from play, from storytelling, from narration and conversation, from jumping and splashing.

Weighty matters of life and death – "Is he alive?" [*Tim points to the beetle he has just drowned*] – are seamlessly interwoven with scatological poetry – "Poo. Poo. Poo to you!" – and wonderful state-of-the-nation questions and statements – "Is it hot today?" "I love you all the way to Africa south and back," while I sit here in the sun wondering and delighting in the chance to watch and share in the mystery of this unfolding human life. SPLOOSH!! Droplets of water sprinkle the page as Tim clatters and tumbles into the shimmering water.

John Sloper, 10 Monkton, Winterborne Monkton, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 9PT
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C O N G R A T U L A T I O N S to everyone who took GCSE and other exams this summer and survived their results. A particular mention (from Mum) to ANDREW LEA, aged 11 years from Blackpool, for his grade A pass in GCSE music. **Well done to all!**

Children letting go - naturally

Children need to go to school at an early age to learn independence. We all know that our children won't be dependent on us forever. When they are born they are totally dependent on us for everything, but it is only a few brief months before they can do all sorts of things for themselves. But how about their need for your love and emotional support? The received wisdom on the subject is that the bond between parents and children, although important in the early years, becomes a positive disadvantage to the child when they reach five and is in danger of retarding their emotional separation and damaging their ability to be independent human beings. This is the cut off point; the time has come to make the break. Mothers whose children cry and cling on being taken to nursery or school are told that it is a normal part of growth for a child and that you are only making it worse by staying and pandering to their need to be with you. As a parent you are made to feel that you are actually 'using' your child for your own emotional needs. Respecting their need to be with you is seen as being unwilling to separate, deliberately manipulating your child and creating dependency.

Some children leap into independence from their parents at quite an early age, others are naturally more reticent and need the reassurance of a parent nearby in unfamiliar surroundings until a much later age. There is nothing normal about making a child feel abandoned by the only person he was sure he could rely on or forcing independence on a child not ready for it. Many people nowadays have come to believe that this enforced separation is very damaging to a child's sense of security. Society's ideas about what is good for children so often do not have a basis in any understanding of human nature but are adopted because it is 'convenient' for the smooth running of the system. The assumptions of society about young children do not treat them as individuals who might have their own ideas about their need for independence, but as a mass group that needs to be 'managed'. Home education allows the child to separate from their parents at a rate that suits them rather than at the dictates of society. Human beings are social animals and have a curiosity about the wider society that develops with their own confidence and maturity. You don't have to force children into stressful social situations and push them away from you in order to assist the process of separation. By respecting a child's own agenda regarding independence you do not make them more clingy but you make them more secure in their primary relationship and more sure they can rely on you should the situation be more than they can cope with. As they get older they will let you know when they are really ready to move outside the known secure environment, and when they do it is with more confidence than a child who has been pushed.

To be more personal I remember when my oldest son first went to reception class. He was there because he asked to be, not because I sent him. On the fourth day he was upset and unsure about staying. I sat with him for quite a while until the teacher decided it was time I left as he was upsetting the others, so the two teachers

restrained him so I could leave. I was so distraught by the experience (but felt unable to go against what the 'system' thought best) I went around to the school secretary's office, since I happened to know the lady, hoping for some sympathy. Her response was that I should not be so silly and that he had to get used to being apart from me and he would be perfectly all right as soon as I left. I wish now that I had done differently. As time and experience have changed me and my parenting I can watch my children's growing independence with more confidence, and I hope I am neither pushing nor holding back but giving support and encouragement in a home environment where there are no expectations or an external agenda for when they should be ready to go their own way.

Home Education Myths Number 47

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

Education Otherwise empowers others

I joined EO in 1993, when my son Alex was 10 and desperately unhappy at school. Finding out that it was legal to home-educate seemed to me to be the answer to my prayers. Unfortunately, the LEA wasn't as enthusiastic with the idea as either Alex or me. They came down on us like a ton of bricks, writing a damning report. In desperation I made phone calls to EO and was put in touch with Anne Wade, who gave legal advice to EO members.

I remember thinking, "at last, someone can fight my case for me," and thinking Anne could take over and take on the LEA for me. I had a lot of growing up to do. Here I was, willing to take on the responsibility of my son's education, yet unwilling to take on the LEA. I had the idea that they were this huge and powerful authority and I, this weak little individual. How glad I am that Anne came to my rescue with wonderful advice, strong emotional support and caring enough to come with me to the meeting with the LEA. How glad I am that Anne didn't rush in and 'take charge'. She didn't say, "leave it up to me". She enabled me to deal with the LEA. She was there in case I fell flat on my face, but she let me know that I could do it. She equipped me with the legal knowledge I needed, she let me know that the LEA, rather than being an all-powerful authority, are people, sometimes with less legal knowledge than us, sometimes helpful, sometimes obstructive – but definitely not 'all-powerful'. She let me know that I, too, was powerful. I think this is one of the great strengths of EO. Rather than being a 'nanny organisation', if we want, we can use it to help us grow as people. I know I'm stronger for having been a member.

Frankie Inglis, 145 Maxey Road, Dagenham, Essex RM9 5HS

School Teacher Victimisation

Our daughter was nine when she began to be socially excluded from her classmates, with whom she had shared her life since starting school. Straight away we knew it was the teacher of that year who had somehow 'caused' a problem, having already been told that he had several complaints against him of this nature and been suspended twice previously. The way in which the children collected vibes and interpreted what was acceptable to the adult, and the speed with which they escalate the situation, like butter melting on a hot day, leaves you dizzy.

The headmaster, firstly refused to admit anything was happening; secondly he confessed that it had happened before, but tried to infer that we made too much of it and were to blame for its escalation, because we listened to gossip. Lastly, he admitted that it had happened and was happening but, he was powerless to intervene as the teacher in question was either very cunning or oblivious to what he was doing (having dragged his union rep through two previous disciplinary tribunals). Eventually, with parental opinion sighting our daughter as the villain in the class, it was decided that she should leave.

Two years later, I was contacted by one of these same parents, whose younger son was the current victim, transformed from a happy, popular child into a bed-wetting, insecure wreck. She campaigned against this teacher, raising a petition for his dismissal and last year his disciplinary hearing went against him and he was excluded from teaching within this Borough. He is still free to teach in other areas!

Our daughter went through a period of trauma while settling at a new school, which I can only compare to a divorce or bereavement. Those of you who have experienced this will know it, and those imagining can only visualise a 'lemming-like' craving to be in the same places where you were once accepted, in some small hope of reversing the unpleasantness. "Let's not dwell on it," became our code for closing an imaginary draw in which these hurt feelings lay. Reading *School Refusal* in August's Newsletter, was a time amongst many when the draw flies open and those feelings are once again exposed to us. Our first thoughts are that if we had known about home education before, and not gone to school, none of this would have happened. Then again, we wouldn't know with absolute certainty that what we have been doing for the last year was really our choice.

To cut a long story short, she was not allowed to move onto the secondary school with her new friends and so we've followed our own path. We've achieved a great deal in this first year, attending many adult education classes and filling our week with a good balance. We've been meeting and making new friends through EO and Christian Educators, giving her numerous opportunities (sometimes through gritted teeth) to return to school, but she's adamant that it's not for her and, given our family experience, it's not for us either.

Jackie Goldsworthy, 23 Parkhill Road, Chingford, London E4 7ED

Robert Krampf's Experiment of the Week!

#127 Non-Popping Bubbles

This week's experiment comes from a question sent to me by Sarah and her cousin, Shawna. It was such a good question that I decided to use it for this week's experiment. To try this, you will need:

bubble solution, a bubble wand or a drinking straw, paper towels.

If you don't have any bubble solution, you can make your own. There are many different recipes available. I have found that dishwashing soap in water works very well for this. Once you have the solution, blow some bubbles. If you have a bubble wand, then dip it in the solution and wave it around. Catch one of the bubbles on the wand. If you don't have a bubble wand, pour some of the solution into a small bowl and then blow into it with the straw to make a pile of bubbles.

Once you have one or more bubbles, you are ready to begin the experiment. Be sure your finger is dry and touch the bubble. What happens? It pops, just as you would expect. Now, make another bubble. This time, dip your finger into the bubble solution. Be sure that it is VERY wet. Now touch the bubble. Not only does it not pop, you can actually stick your finger into the bubble without popping it.

Why? To understand, put a drop of water on the table. Touch the drop of water with a paper towel. Watch how the water flows into the paper. This is what happens when your dry finger touches the bubble. Water and soap in the bubble flows to your finger, weakening the bubble.

Put another drop of water on the table. Dip part of a paper towel into some water and touch the water drop with the wet paper towel. This time, not much happens. The towel is already soaked with water, so none of the water from the drop flows to it. The same thing happens when you touch the bubble with a finger that is wet with the bubble solution. If you want to take this experiment another step, try wetting your finger with plain water before you touch the bubble. Does that make a difference? What if you wet your finger with cooking oil or other liquids?

Robert Krampf has kindly given his permission for Education Otherwise to reproduce this experiment in our newsletter. You can obtain others by emailing him at krampf@aol.com and asking to be added to the Experiment of the Week List.

Get the first 100 Experiments in book form! To order, send \$9.95, plus \$3.00 postage and handling to:

Robert Krampf
PO Box 60982
Jacksonville, FL 32236-0982

Home education and the draft SEN Code of Practice

The DfEE are required to issue a code of practice on special educational needs (SEN) in England and Wales. The purpose of this code is to supplement the law by giving 'practical guidance' to LEAs, governing bodies and others. LEAs etc. are in turn required to 'have regard to' the code of practice. The current code was issued in September 1994, and the DfEE propose to replace it in September 2001. In July they issued a draft new edition for consultation. Interested parties have until 13 October to comment on it.

At first sight the draft is all about schools and seems to be of no direct concern to home educators. However, closer inspection reveals that a new paragraph has been inserted into the 1994 text. The paragraph appears in a chapter on the statementing process, under the heading 'Education otherwise than at school', a term which in the previous edition was used solely to signify arrangements made by LEAs:

The Education Act 1996, section 7, gives parents the right to choose to educate their child at home. Such arrangements are described as 'education otherwise than at school'. In such cases if the child has a statement of special educational needs, it remains the LEA's duty to ensure that the child's needs are met. The statement must remain in force and the LEA must ensure that the parents can make the provision as set out in Part 3 of the statement without the LEA providing it. If the parents can fulfil the statement then the LEA is relieved of their duty to arrange the provision. If however the parents attempt to educate the child otherwise than at school results in provision which falls short of that specified in Part 3, then the parents are not making 'suitable arrangements' and the LEA could not conclude that they were absolved of their responsibility to arrange the provision in the statement. If the LEA are satisfied, Part 4 of the statement should reflect that the parents are educating the child at home. The LEA remains under a duty to maintain the child's statement and to review it annually following the procedures set out in Chapter Nine.

This paragraph, which has given rise to a certain amount of alarm among home educators, appears to be based on a number of false premises. The main one is that Parts 3 and 4 of a statement are relevant to arrangements made by parents. Under the most simple and obvious reading of the law, they are not.

LEAs have to make a statement of SEN if, in the light of an assessment, they need to decide what provision is called for. Part 2 of the statement sets out the child's needs, Part 3 specifies the provision required to meet those needs (including objectives, modifications to and exclusions from the National Curriculum, targets and monitoring), and Part 4 relates to placement. (This part of the statement mentions 'education otherwise than at school', but these words should be taken to refer to alternative arrangements made by the LEA.) The LEA must arrange for the provision set out in the statement to be made 'unless the child's parent has made suitable arrangements'.

The crux of the matter is the meaning of the word 'suitable'. Parents of children with special educational needs are required under s 7 of the Education Act 1996 to see that they receive education suitable to those needs. However, if they choose to

make their own arrangements (whether by means of private schools or otherwise) it is not at all clear that they should be required to make the specific provision set out in any statement.

With this in mind, a small group of people working on behalf of EO have been drafting a carefully argued response to the DfEE's text. All being well, by the time you read these words it should have been agreed and submitted. We expect to begin by pointing out that home education arrangements made by parents are quite different from those made by LEAs and should be dealt with separately. After making our arguments in detail, we aim to present the DfEE with a possible alternative section on home education by parental choice. The main points we should like to see in it are as follows:

- Where parents make their own arrangements the LEA will need to consider whether they are suitable to the child's needs.
- If so they will no longer need to determine the nature of the provision called for.
- Therefore where a new statement has been drawn up it may be appropriate to abandon it at this point.
- If parents start home education when a statement is already in force, they do not have to make the provision set out in the statement to ensure that their arrangements are suitable.
- In such cases it may no longer be necessary to maintain the statement.
- Bearing in mind that statements are meant to safeguard the child's right to suitable education, the LEA should consider whether an eventual return to school is expected, or whether college entry or exam concessions are a possibility.
- In deciding whether to cease a statement they should put this to the parents, and be guided by their views and stated intentions.
- In any case, as long as the parents are home educating Parts 3 and 4 of the statement will be 'dormant', and only Part 2 ('Special educational needs') will be relevant.

If the DfEE's original text is retained the consequences could be serious as LEAs will be required by law to 'have regard to' it. In effect the Department will have added their own gloss to the law in much the same way as a judge might. However, their proposed gloss is an extremely convoluted one and might be susceptible to challenge. But this may never arise. We hope they find our arguments unanswerable and revise their draft accordingly.

Rob Wade, London – Middlesex

If you would like a full copy of the final submission, please send me a stamped addressed C5 envelope with an extra first class stamp towards photocopying, or email me at rob.wade@tvu.ac.uk

Education Otherwise Conference 2000 - York 26th August.

What a day! The conference team: Martine, Beverley, Celia & daughter Bryony - two for the price of one ☺, and Gwen are all grateful for the help that was offered, especially from those who pitched in at the last minute when they saw assistance was needed. This generosity with time and effort for no financial reward extended to all the speakers at the conference, as well as Klaus Selke and colleague from Hull University who ran workshops on electricity & electronics, a design exercise to build a bridge out of paper to span a metre and take the weight of a rather flash customised model lorry, plus another project to build a buggy out of Meccano. The Hall, where all this was happening, was buzzing with activity and this certainly helped some of our 350 attendees to have a great day. Other visitors enjoyed making dream catchers, hats, badges, masks and modelling with clay, whilst others slept or played in the crèche. *We didn't distribute the Certificates for those who participated in the design exercise and/or fulfilled the design criteria - please let me have your details.

Throughout this bustle, and in addition to on-going discussion groups, in the Lecture Theatre Roland Meighan opened the proceedings to a packed audience with his rendition of the Animal School story. Of course it seems foolish to expect fish to fly and eagles to dig without great damage being done both to the confidence of the little creatures, and to their subsequent ability to perform the tasks they *are* inherently equipped to do...but do we expect this of humans? This provided a good lead into the talk by Alan Thomas where he posed the tongue in cheek question "*What is the best method to use when educating children at home?*" The suggestion was that parents should feel free to work with their unique children in the way that seems most appropriate to them, and not get too caught up in 'ideal systems'. See Alan's book *Educating Children at Home* (Cassell).

The next speaker was Chris Winters, BT's Venture Research Manager. There are many perspectives about the role of technology in education and Chris gave an interesting talk, delivered in a lively style. I am chuffed that afterwards a member of the audience offered to write a feature, or series even, for the newsletter about all this. After lunch, we were treated to being settled down and read to by the freelance playwright and actress Therese Collins. Although Therese's readings sprang from poignant recollections of life in school as an unrecognised dyslexic (remedial she is NOT!), and touched many a chord with those who have been there too, she also had everyone laughing with her quirky sense of humour. A special thank you to EO member, Helen Albans, who led the discussion that followed this presentation. Finally Roland Meighan returned to talk about the need to raise children to think and understand the collective responsibility that comes with developing a democratic society; this was in addition to a summary of the *Next Learning System*. As one of the founding members of EO it seemed fitting that he started us off and then wrapped up the day.

As well as thanking the above-mentioned people, and Schofield & Sims for helping the event to happen by paying for the hire of the rooms, we'd also like to thank the attendees for being good company. It is always great to meet new and old friends - EO has come a long way with the help of some amazing people. As I said at the conference, there are still many gaps in we do, but with help we can gradually plug those gaps. Please get in touch if you have anything to offer, perhaps with your Local Contact, a Council member, or Angela Smith the Small Jobs co-ordinator. Also, the conference team would appreciate feedback on the day we had, the good and especially the bad!

LOST PROPERTY. We have a child's sleeveless Street Gear grey fleece (12-13 yrs), a terracotta coloured baby sling, a two-tone blue fleecy Next top (age 3/4), a blue waterproof Regatta coat (size 22"), a green watch, and a pink reporters notebook from the dyslexia discussion session.

Gwen Baldock 6 Villa Grove, York YO31 7TB Email: gwen.baldock@cwcom.net. P.S. Copies of any photos would be very welcome as I forgot to take my camera! *Tapes & handouts following.

FROM THE ARCHIVES...

The mysterious origins of Education Otherwise are examined this month.

*The meeting on home-based education held at Lower Shaw Farm on 17-18th September 1976 was the third effort to get a national network started. The first two produced little tangible result. The main difficulty had been simply to find sufficient families actually doing it, instead of just thinking about it. It is extraordinary how many people express a strong interest in deschooling when they hear about it, but how very few there are who are actually doing it. This suggests that the network is really needed, to give that little bit of support and advice that will help people over the hump.
Dick Kitto. EO Newsletter number One!*

On February 3rd 1977 Granada Television broadcast a programme called Opting Out in their lunchtime series Parents' Day. That programme reported the experience of three families who had decided to educate their children at home. The address of Education Otherwise was given at the end of the programme and so far about 250 people have written for more information ... The response to the programme encouraged us to go ahead and set up Education Otherwise as a formal organisation. A meeting ... in February produced a statement of aims and objectives and it was decided to raise some money through annual subscriptions which could be used to produce the various documents we felt were needed - another newsletter, a list of practical books, a list of useful organisations. Dick writing in Newsletter 2, April 1977

*The core group ...decided to form a broad-based group and try to help all enquiries... I also think we should be thinking of the future and possible new directions for EO both political and Political.
Mike Lydiat, writing in Newsletter 3, July 1977*

*There are now nearly a hundred of you and the numbers are increasing slowly but steadily... we feel that Education Otherwise has reached a stage where it would very much benefit from a big input of active support...
Newsletter 4, Dick Kitto and Sarah Guthrie (! the very same), November 1977*

The response to our television programme has been over 1000 enquiries, nearly 80 new members and a number of families in urgent need of advice and help, all of which has been very time-consuming. Letters are still coming in at the rate of 20 a day and I confidently expect our membership to reach 200 by the early summer. This isn't a great number perhaps but it confirms that we are a movement that is steadily growing and reaching more and more people ... Is there anyone who would like to take a more active part in editing the newsletter - and improving it? Dick writing in Newsletter 5, April 1978

*I am now convinced that EO has a valid role to play not just in supporting its member families but on the educational scene as a whole.
Dick, April 78 again*

Report from EO's DfEE Working Party August 2000

Education Otherwise is currently involved in a series of meetings with the Department for Education & Employment (DfEE) in London, with the aim of exploring issues of concern and interest to our membership. Initially, a proposed agenda was offered to the Featherstone meeting in September 1999 and a full update went into the newsletter that followed the first meeting in October (this also went out to the UK Home Ed List and elsewhere). Since then we have had various communications to clarify the information we are seeking and to be introduced to different personnel. These matters have been discussed during open Council meetings, and the situation reported on in subsequent newsletters.

EO's DfEE working party consists of Anne Wade, Jill Fisher and Gwen Baldock. More recently Ann Samuel Till, who has been working hard on EO's behalf with the new Parliament in Scotland as well as the Scottish Consumer Council, joined the team. The issues being addressed are:

Use of the trademark name 'Education Otherwise'

The DfEE appreciates that the name *Education Otherwise* is a name registered to our charity and they are not now using this term in publications. We asked if the DfEE might help us to encourage those LEAs that are reluctant to stop using our name, in potentially quite a misleading way, by establishing use of terms that differentiate better between '*home education by parental preference*' and '*alternative provision by LEAs*'. These terms can easily be shortened to 'home education' and 'alternative provision', whilst remaining easily understood. This would ideally replace the current usage of *Education Otherwise than at School (EOTAS)*. This is more than just a worry about parents being very confused about who they are talking to, as we find many LEA officials themselves are confusing those that are 'educating otherwise than at school'. Some of the problems EO members face are because we have been wrongly included in policy that is not directed at ourselves.

Educating Children at Home (England and Wales): a DfEE Factsheet.

Following our meeting with the DfEE last October, when we itemised our concerns about the leaflet they were handing out to parents enquiring about home education, useful changes have already been made. For example the DfEE's leaflet no longer states that parents *should* inform their LEA that they are home educating, rather, in recognition of the invitational approach that we are wishing to emphasise it now states that, "*Although parents are not legally required to inform their LEA when they decide to educate their children at home, it is helpful if they do this.*" In addition, the new leaflet reminds people that LEAs have no automatic right of access to the parents' home and then suggests various ways that officers and families might work together.

This is an ongoing process and we are working on further alterations. An example here is that as the DfEE refers to availability of National Curriculum information, it could appear to those that do not realise otherwise, that they are required to obtain and use this material. Therefore, we are asking that a sentence be included that clarifies the position. Further, where it is stated that "*The LEA will need to satisfy itself that a child is receiving suitable education*", this is not accurate. We suggest this be changed to:

'LEAs have a duty to take action if they believe a child is not receiving a suitable education, and case law has established that LEAs are entitled to informally ask home educating families for information about their education. To this effect an officer from the LEA may ask to meet with parents in order to agree on the nature of any contact.'

Special Educational Needs -SEN

The first issue that EO is addressing with special needs is the fact that parents with children registered in a special school need prior permission to remove them in order to be home educated. This is a different position from that of those attending other schools where parents simply write to the school, and inform them that they are removing their child. This followed a change in the de-registration regulations that was brought about after much campaigning by EO through Anne and Rob Wade. We do have an assurance from the DfEE that families will not be prevented from removing children from special school in these circumstances, but even so, this is a piece of discriminatory legislation that could continue to be misused.

The second piece of work with special needs is that we are trying to take the opportunity of a new Code of Practice, to clarify the position regarding the need for a Statement of SEN when a child becomes home educated. We have to be cautious that we do not encourage statements, and any ongoing responsibility LEAs might usefully have, to be dropped against the will of the family on removal from school. This is because the statement might represent a hard won achievement and the child, if they do go back to school, may need it later. Also, home educators might be happy to receive help of a specialised nature from the authorities if this were to be made available, including extra time with exams and support in the transfer to college. However, it is equally important that the statement does not become a thing that prevents families from home educating, or home educating in a way they feel is most appropriate. This might be a consequence of a statement that makes unreasonable demands e.g., to pay for a certain number of hours of specialist help. Therefore EO is trying to ensure that the Code of Practice directs that any statements require home educating parents to ensure the child's *needs* are adequately catered for (as with all families under section 7 of the Education Act 1996), not that the parents must fulfil any *provision* that a statement lays out. The latter is intended for a school type setting and may need modifying on removal from school should it be desirable to maintain a statement. See Rob Wade's report elsewhere.

Pre-16 college entry

Colleges of Further and Higher Education no longer come under the jurisdiction of LEAs, and their budget comes from a central source now. Although they are able to accept students who are 13-16 years, funding remains a problem as LEAs hold the budget for pre-16s and say they offer school places. A degree of flexibility *is* possible to fund college places for pupils who are excluded etc, but usually no help is offered to home educators, even for students who were withdrawn from school originally because they had become deeply unhappy there. For these children school attendance may never be an option again, yet over time they (and others too) find they might like to go to college; but find they are now the excluded ones. Current debate about access to education and how this can be promoted does not accord with what happens for many families. This is frustrating to parents with young people eager to go into further education, especially when they wish to use this approach for exam taking. We are currently exploring ways that may be open to bring about greater flexibility of provision for pre-16s.

Relationship with LEAs

As part of our discussions with the DfEE we are explaining that Education Otherwise aims to develop good relationships with LEAs, and indeed in many parts of the country the work we are doing is helping to bring about a very positive response with LEAs increasingly directing families to us. However this is not common in all areas as yet and there is still too much variation around the country in the way families are being treated. Part of the problem is lack of adequate knowledge about the alternative, including not being familiar with the research that clearly demonstrates how well home educated children generally do irrespective of the

parents' social and educational background - and even though many children are home educated because school was not working for them. Further, this is because of, not in spite of, the fact that the chosen approach is often quite unconventional.

We will continue to share this information with the DfEE. We will also try to demonstrate the inappropriateness, when LEA officers are asking home educators for information about their education, of using age related assessment criteria that are designed to be used when learning in school to a national curriculum. This is not relevant to an alternative that can be more of an autonomous way of learning; i.e., often incorporating a flexible approach based on informal learning full of purposive conversation in real life settings, and which stresses active participation by the child. Although there might be a common core of certain desired learning outcomes, for instance in the literacy and numeracy areas, even here the readiness of the child is considered of paramount importance as opposed to an externally imposed time-table. Also, the objectives of a more democratic and/or fully autonomous education can be fundamentally different and it is not, therefore, at all appropriate to assess a child with tools designed for an entirely different learning system. These differences in understanding form the basis for some of the biggest areas of conflict, and can lead people to take strong defensive positions.

The above issues have already undergone some initial discussion and reporting, and there is much work to do now that we have highlighted some of EO's concerns. Information that led to the following point, however, came to light more recently and it is very important that members consider the content and offer ideas and feedback on this as well.

Gathering of statistics and Unique Pupil Numbers

The concept of tracking of pupils is in part to do with the gathering of statistics, but it is also associated with the national introduction of Unique Pupil Numbers (UPNs), which in itself raises the question of legitimate access to certain data. Education Otherwise is concerned about the underlying way in which any information will be obtained and what will be done with the information collected. We are seeking clarification on:

- What data will be used to gather information about children in order to establish a database for the issuing of UPNs; and would it be appropriate to use Child Benefit records, for example, for a purpose other than that for which they were established?
- Is this exercise directed at all children or just those attending state maintained schools, together with those in need of alternative provision by LEAs?
- If those in the private sector, including home educators, are not to be included in the gathering of information exercise that will occur in order to establish a database for the issuing of UPNs, how will they be distinguished from other children, and what will happen to any data gathered that concerns them?
- When parents de-register a child who already has a UPN from school, what will happen to the tracking system and number in these cases?

LEAs may feel it is appropriate to use UPNs to keep track of pupils for whom they are responsible, but if the scheme is to be extended to children receiving home-based education by parental preference, we feel that any possible consequences should first be thoroughly explored. Apart from the civil liberties implications, there are a number of other considerations.

Firstly, through our work with LEAs we find that the most effective way of helping officers and families to work together is by the LEA adopting a supportive, invitational approach. A large proportion of the difficulties families experience at present, are because many people in the education authorities do not yet understand how successful home education is, both in terms of the academic achievement of children and their social development. We find that officers who know this, and who appreciate how much support Education Otherwise can offer through our large network of experienced members, are happy to develop the invitational approach. Our view concerning this has been borne out by Petrie, Thomas and Windrass (Dec.1999). In their research "*The Prevalence of home education in England: a feasibility study*", which showed it is not feasible to establish numbers in fact, they also found that officers themselves did not want anything like compulsory registration as it might undermine developing relationships as well as leading to situations that may be difficult to resolve. Further some officers asked, 'what would we do with families who do not want to register and work with us; are they threatened with court and prison sentences'?

Good levels of cooperation have not yet been achieved in all areas; in fact many families still have to work with authorities, or individual officers, who are hostile to the very idea of home education. It would not be appropriate in these cases to have the extent of the families' current autonomy reduced. These problems have been researched in Scotland by the Scottish Consumer Council, with the assistance of home educators there, and reported on in their document '*Home Works*', published in July 2000.

On the practical side, if the use of UPNs were to lead to tracking of all pupils and even to a call for compulsory registration (something we *must* be alert to), how would policy makers plan to achieve this; what about the consultation process; where would the money be found to pay for such an extensive new policy; and would this be a good use of the education budget? Further, might this lead to a call for greater standardisation of home education and undermine the very reasons why it is so successful i.e., through the use of supported personalised and flexible learning opportunities.

This is something we are very keen to follow through, as these particular discussions will take place with or without us there in any case. If we do not engage in the debate we cannot secure the necessary understanding and influence good practice in the way that has happened in other countries. For example in Tasmania, home educators are involved in a very effective official body called the Home Education Advisory Council. This council, in part, ensures that any education legislation aimed at mainstream schooling, properly considers the impact on home educators. Another example is what happens in Canada where home educators can choose to register with varying degrees of commitment and then receive varying amounts of support, including the use of computers and other resources, and access to learning networks. Families who do not want to register do not have to.

Members of EO's DfEE working party welcome ideas and feedback on the work that is taking place. In addition to using the newsletter as a channel for debate, the personal contact that is available through the Contact List (thank you for the contributions so far), the meetings and gatherings, and EO's new Internet list, we have opened an email inbox that will be dedicated to this particular area of discussion and is there for any home educator to use. Only members of EO's DfEE team will have access to any contributions, so people can feel able to be open in the views they express; confidentiality will be ensured for those who would rather air their thoughts in this way. The address is eo_dfее@hotmail.com

All the best, **Gwen Baldock**

Those who can, do, those who can't, bully

A website on bullying worth visiting : extract

I believe a school should create an environment whereby children understand from the moment they start school that bullying, aggression and violence are not acceptable. It is often the absence of such an ethos that potential bullies perceive as acceptance of their aggressive behaviour. A policy is a start, but it must be a proactive policy, not just a rule book which is dusted down in the head's study after aggression has resulted in injury. Positive behaviour should be part of the national curriculum, but unfortunately it is not a subject that produces statistical data that the government can use to show how wonderful its education policy is. In fact, behavioural skills, assertiveness, parenting skills, success training - key skills for a successful life and career - are conspicuously absent from the national curriculum. I also believe that a whole-school policy should also support both parties. The target is taught assertiveness skills (this will not solve a bullying problem but enables a child to learn verbal self-defence), whilst the bully is taught how to deal with their aggression and how to interact socially with other children. I believe physical punishment is inappropriate, for it reinforces the bullying child's view that violence is an appropriate solution to any problem - if you don't like what someone else is doing, it's OK to hit them. The bullying child needs support, supervision, and mentoring, whilst being helped to understand that violence is not acceptable.

Sadly, the education system is still one where aggression and violence are dominant. The popular students tend to be the jocks, those with sporting prowess, especially in those activities which require physical strength. In classes, the most aggressive pupil tends to be the one around who all others cluster. Aggression rules. Those children who are non-violent, not physically strong, or physically small, are always vulnerable; their needs are often overlooked, as are their talents. School environments tend to be one of "exclusion" rather than "inclusion". Children are left to form their own groups, or gangs, and you are either "in" or "out". I believe children should be taught at the outset to show dignity and respect to other children regardless of whether they are "in" or "out", and to be proactive in their relationships to other children, especially those who "do not fit in", for whatever reason. Conformity is high in the list of children's priorities, and rejection, for whatever reason, is particularly painful. Sadly, many children do not learn the best interaction skills at home, and this is where schools can make a big difference.

Much good work has been done on addressing bullying in schools, but much remains to be done. Research shows that at least 4 out of 10 children will be bullied at school. The incidence is probably much higher. It's worth remembering that bullying prevents children from undertaking their studies and results in grades which are lower than they would otherwise be which means that the school appears lower down the league tables than they otherwise would.

If a child learns how to bully, and gets away with it, there's a lot of anecdotal evidence to suggest they leave school and carry on their bullying in the workplace.

This web site is the result.

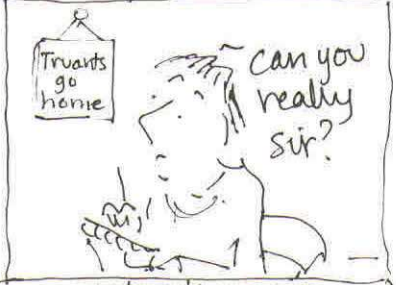
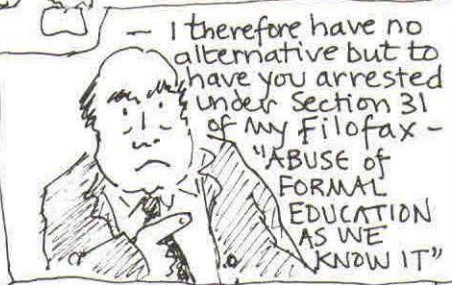
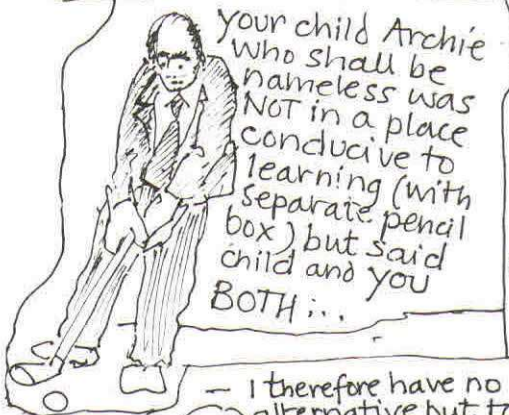
Tim Field

Reproduced from Bully Online at www.successunlimited.co.uk

EDUCATING ARCHIE ^{by SEG}



THOSE AUTUMN BLUES!!





Problem page

A PROBLEM ANSWERED:

My family and my in-law's are very unsupportive of our decision to home-educate our children. They are constantly comparing the children to their cousins, unfavourably, and refuse to see them in 'school' hours. It is wearing us down. Can anyone offer advice as to how to cope?

Here is a selection of the answers received:

Challenge your family and in-laws as to the consequences of what they are saying. They are setting the children up against each other so that in time they will grow to hate each other.

Look closely at the reasons why their response is so negative: perhaps there are fears and concerns that need to be aired and discussed fully.

I have found as a new home educator that there is not a great deal of support generally. I have found a quotation from Eleanor Roosevelt "Nobody can make you feel inferior without your consent." I read this when I feel I'm climbing a mountain and it usually makes me reach the top!

One way to deal with this problem is to emphasise any achievement the children have - this may help them to see that 'home education' does not equal 'no education'

We have got round this problem by meeting 'during school hours' for educational visits or doing educational activities e.g. bird watching with them.

Maybe all you can do is stick to your guns and quietly get on with what you believe to be right without ramming it down their throats. I have found this approach to be successful in the long-term. In fact, now, (six years on) my initially unsupportive mother comes over one day a week and takes over the education side while I go out to work!

Leave articles and books out that discuss home education in a positive light - it might convince them that what you are doing has a proven track record and that it can, and does, work.

The following article is very relevant to this month's problem

We have had critics, mainly from the teaching profession and those acquaintances who spend thousands of pounds to end their children to fee paying schools (well they have to justify the scrimping and scraping), not so much though from the grandparents. My mother shared two sad memories with me that have stuck in my mind, in moments of self-doubt, this last year.

The first was of her own wartime childhood, aged 10, being sent away to evacuation in Scotland, not understanding a word that anyone said to her and feeling very much alone. She was billeted with a Jewish family (not our religion) and remembers working out, even at that age, that if the Germans did get across the Channel, she'd be for the gas chamber for sure! She eventually returned home with an accent and a new-found respect for the teacher, learnt from the strap that hung on the classroom wall. On her return to London, she found that none of her friends had had the pleasant adventure with a kindly family, portrayed in the propaganda, and most of them had been abused in some way. The second story was in 1959, the

year I was born. Lying next to me in the hospital cribs was a beautiful baby boy. My mother grew worried as his mother had not picked him up or even looked at him. She asked "Was anything wrong with him?" The woman replied, "I can't keep him, my bloke won't marry me."

Today it is us that must make a success of our opportunity to home educate, in order that the people behind us have an example to hold up to criticism and maybe these examples will help people who are having difficulties with family, to draw attention to their world's imperfections, without causing slight on your own upbringing.

Jackie Goldsworthy, 23 Parkhill Road, Chingford, London E4 7ED

A response to one of the comments in August's Problem Page

I do not feel that all 13 year olds are like that because I am 13 myself. I and a lot of my friends are always involved in something and are very active. For example, I have just finished making a kennel for my dog. Julia Wilson

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

(ARTICLES RELATED TO THE PROBLEM ARE WELCOME, AS WELL AS SHORT 'ANSWERS', OR COMMENTS AROUND REPLIES GIVEN)

I have two sons under five, and I wish to home-educate. Although I feel sure it is the best thing for them, I am worried that I will have no life outside of the children. How do you find time for yourselves? Also is it possible to have a job and home-educate?

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.

RESPONSES TO NEWSLETTER 135

Karen's letter, in Seeking Contact, p32

I have two children who are now 9 and 6. Benjamin actually did do a year at school but Tabitha, the younger one, has always been taught at home. Let me tell you, it is totally exhausting, totally stressful and 100% rewarding? I am also a single mum, which means that at times the only way I can get away from being teacher/parent is to shut myself away in my bedroom!

To be honest, I don't think there should be a set age when you start to educate. Information on things can be shared at whatever age. There is no age when a child is pre-educational; that is something given to us by the school system. Children reach the age where they start to read, write and understand arithmetic at differing ages. The whole joy and freedom of home-schooling is to do it when you and the individual child are ready, not when a system tells you they are at the "right" age. With my two, I've just done the "scary" Where do babies come from? Question over breakfast, because that's when the question arose. My advice would be not to put things in subjects, but just to go with the flow of as and when they are ready to learn things.

As to whether they are more shy/clingy/withdrawn, I would say it's

the opposite. They do become their own personalities, so if a child is shy, he or she won't become extrovert, but wouldn't have become less shy by being in school. My son, 9, is very open and out-going and can be placed anywhere and will get on with anyone. My daughter struggles with children not as bright or imaginative as she is, and for ages really didn't like other children. I've found home-schooling really suits her because she has the space to pick and choose who she'll be friends with and when.

My main advice to you would be to relax, to do what suits you and yours best, and not to let others bombard you with their advice. There is no right or wrong way. Home education is probably as diverse as the people doing it so, I'd say, go with your flow, not someone else's. Best of luck and go for it.

*Diane Cromie, 20 Laburnum Close,
Frome, Somerset BA11 2UB*

I didn't know originally that it was legal in England [to home-educate] and so I was afraid to home-educate from the first. I sincerely wish I had done so now. I found that school attendance damaged my son's confidence. I also found that he stopped his automatic and dramatic learning almost immediately. I don't think the system has a place for those who can already estimate, count or who have a sense of self-respect. I feel that once you know you have a right to be treated with respect, you cannot easily accept being treated in a rude, disregarding way. It is also boring

Letters

to find you must go back and learn how to do what you can 'properly'. Michael stopped being able to count and multiply once he'd been told that he couldn't because they hadn't taught him that yet!

Viz being shy etc – yeah, standard ammo accusation against home-educating, isn't it? So everybody who's been through the system is a brash, self-confident extrovert, who can't wait to get out there? In our experience it's school that turns people into clingy limpets and recovery takes a long time. I'm in my 40's, but can't say all the hurt has healed. And playgroups – do you realise that most are geared/limited to a nearby school? Caution.

Good luck, um, and there is no 'time out', but it beats the alternative worry and distress hollow.

*Amber Newell, 21 Brook St, Maningtree
CO11 1DL*

HOME EDUCATION FOR US?

I have a two year-old girl and a three year-old boy. Being a young parent, I've never thought much about kid's education. However, my wife is very anti-school and keen to home-educate. Coming from a 'conventional' background, this to me is a new concept of educating.

I have worries such as Could there be harm spending so much time with your parents, for example, later in life, lacking courage to be independent to leave home etc. I am interested to hear of any successful teaching methods for

children and how many home-educating parents are well-educated themselves?

I would like to contact people living in the Hove area; please write if you can help.

Andy & Gloria Bennett, 66a Sackville Road, Hove, East Sussex BN3 3HA

Editor's note: see 'Children letting go' elsewhere in this Newsletter, and previous two letters.

PENFRIENDS IN AMERICA

We wish to inquire about establishing penfriends for our daughters with home-schooled children within your organisation. We ask that you do not post our daughters' names and our address on your website for security reasons, but rather, in any other 'low tech' method. Our daughters are:

Shameka, aged 6, (b. 1993), interests: computers, playing, swimming, art projects.

Crystal, aged 5, (b. 1995), interests: drawing, playing, art, Disney movies.

Years ago, when we began to home-school our older children (who now attend college), they were listed in your newsletter and subsequently established many good, long-distance friendships. We do very much enjoy the content and quality of your website!

*Carole Rast, 1682 Hamilton Avenue,
San Jose, California 95125.5402 USA*

New family? Moved to a new area? Looking for contact? Don't forget to get in touch with your EO local contact for details in your area.

Letters

WORK EXPERIENCE

Further to my letter, *Learning through Fundraising* (NL 133) many thanks to all those who wrote enclosing stamps and donations for Willows Animal Sanctuary.

I thought you would be interest to know that my eldest daughter, Alison, who is 15, has since spent 3 weeks at the Sanctuary helping out. We have known the Robinson family for six years and Alison is great friends with Vikki Robinson. Ali has always been interested in rescue work and was thrilled to have the opportunity to visit. She has now returned for a second stint of what has turned into "real" work experience, doing something she's always dreamed of. It is purely voluntary and she lives as family, while continuing to be home-educated. She is in her element, especially as the sanctuary has also begun taking in injured seagulls in addition to elderly horses and other animals. Alison hoped to go permanently once she is 16. She is with friends who share our views on life as well as home education, so I am happy for her to follow her heart. She also goes to fundraising events in Scotland.

The Sanctuary is still desperate for funds to continue its work, so if anyone would like to help in this area, please contact them at Willows Animal Sanctuary, Findon Farm, Gardenstown, Banff AB45 3ET. Please continue to send used postage stamps (quarter inch all round) to us.

Carol Fountain, Gippyn Cottage,
Gippyn, Cardigan SA43 3LT

PENFRIEND IN FRANCE

We were wondering if you could help us to find and get in touch with an English family which would be roughly interested in the same things as we are. We have 3 children: Maelle (girl) 12 years, Elie (boy) 8 years and Ananda (girl) 3 years. First, we would like to find a pen pal for our elder daughter, and later if they get on well together, why not send our daughter to England an receive the English girl here?

We have been doing homeschooling since the beginning until last year, when the 2 older children showed a desire to fo to public school. During our year at home, we have often been abroad for a few months or a year because it is a priority for us to open our children to different cultures and ways of life. Pascal (father) is a carpenter and Isabelle (mother) is at home.

Maelle, our daughter, practices horse riding; she's close to nature, likes acrobatics and gymnastics. She also likes music. We live in the Alps in a very nice area, near Annecy and Switzerland (Geneva 30 km). There are lots of things to do here. We plan to go back to India next year and to try to spend one year there and maybe more.

Isabelle and Pascal Terrier, 469 Route de Rogemont, 74330 Epagny, France

Unable to get in touch with your EO Local Contact? If you are having difficulties, contact Isobel Bogucki (01403 261178).

Letters

STOP PRESS! CHILDREN'S PAGES

Hi, my name is Holly. I am 14 years old. I like VW cars, horse riding, listening to dance music and reading. I am looking for a pen friend (male or female) of similar age and interests.

*Holly Vincent, 2 Spring Way,
Sible Hedingham, Essex C09 3SB)
c/o ajv@sibleh.fsnet.co.uk*

The entire object of true education is to make people not merely do the right things, but enjoy the right things; not merely industrious, but to love industry; not merely learned, but to love knowledge; not merely pure, but to love purity; not merely just, but to hunger and thirst after justice. *John Ruskin*

SEEKING CONTACT

NEW CONTACT LIST OUT SOON

Have you remembered to renew your membership? Don't miss your chance to be in the new Contact List (and to receive one). The new issue will be sent with your December Newsletter. If you have a new address, or would like your e-mail address included in the Contact List, please contact Database Secretary, Linda Hitchman (see inside back cover) before the end of October.

Are there any families within travelling distance of Grimsby and Cleethorpes, who would be interested in getting together on a regular basis? There is a small group of us that meet twice a month for the children to play and the parents to chat. We are planning on getting together more frequently and perhaps adding some activities.

Stella (01472 879617) Name and address supplied.

SCIENCE RESOURCES

We are the Wales family. We have recently moved here, but are finding difficulty sourcing certain materials. We want to look at basic electrics, so we need simple switches, bulb holders, magnets etc. If anyone knows where we might obtain these, in kit form or otherwise, we would appreciate it if you could let us know (anywhere, UK, USA etc).

*P Wales, Cottage 815, Goolds Cross,
Cashel, Co. Tipperary, Ireland*

I am Marlene and I am the new Local Contact for Tyne and Wear. We have a son called Ben who is 8 years old, who was withdrawn from school 1 year ago and who is really enjoying and thriving on home education. We have a good relationship with our LEA and hope other EO members also have to. Please feel that you can contact me either for a chat or advice (0191 4133067).

Wendy Field, a recent new member, is trying to organise regular get-togethers plus activities for the Tyne & Wear area. She would like to hear from people who would like to get involved. Wendy's number is 0191 5489470.

*Marlene Dawson, 13 May Av, Ryton,
Tyne & Wear NE40 3PS*

The mother's heart is the child's schoolroom. *Henry Ward Beecher*

EDUCATION OTHERWISE BUSINESS

Education Otherwise Adverts

STEVE A Story of Home Education
(64 pages incl. valuable index) published under the pseudonym Elizabeth James - is now available from the author, Mrs Margaret Stevens @ £4.50 (+ £1 p&p). Details: **01844 343 928** or order (with cheque made payable to Education Otherwise) from: **High Beech, Lower Rd, Looseley Row, Princes Risborough, Bucks HP27 0NU**

E.O. T-SHIRTS

Good quality "Fruit of the Loom" white cotton T - shirts printed with the E.O. logo (red triangle kicked open by running children)

£ 5 adult (Medium, Large, or Xlarge)
£ 3.50 child (3/4, 5/6, 7/8, 9/11, 12/13)

Postage & packing:

Up to 6 shirts: £2.00

7 shirts or more: £4.00

Cheques payable to: "E.O. Trading Ltd."

**Matthew Connor, 2 Whitegates Lane,
Reading, Berkshire, RG6 1ED.**

EDUCATING CHILDREN AT HOME

by Alan Thomas (Cassell 1998) This book covers research into 100 home educating families in delightfully readable format. There are accounts of different methods and lots of quotes from families. Offered to EO members at special price of **£9.50** from:

85 Coleridge Road, London N8 5EG,
cheques payable to Education Otherwise.

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.

VACANCY - TREASURER

Priscilla has asked to step down at the AGM in January so we are looking for a new Treasurer to keep the books and write the cheques. The books are currently Excel spreadsheets and cheques need to be written once a week. Whoever takes over will have to be prepared to become a council member. For more information contact **Priscilla Park Weir. 0845 458 3085**

Vacancies for Enquiries Secretaries

We still need new volunteers urgently for both postal and telephone enquiries. Full support and training will be provided. A training day is currently being organised and expenses will be paid for volunteers. For more information please contact **Geraldine Adams Tel: 0171 263 4922**

EO Bulletin No 2

This bulletin was sent out to all those doing a job in EO. It would be very helpful to receive some feedback from those who have already received a copy. Is this a good idea? Should we continue?

If anyone else would like to receive a copy contact Richard Eaton for e-mail richard007_1999@yahoo.co.uk.

Or by post from Priscilla Park Weir, 212 Gordon Avenue, Camberley, Surrey GU15 2NT Tel: 01276 22735

Local contacts might find it useful to receive a regular copy of this. If they do not have email perhaps someone in the county would be willing to act as an email address for them. The Bulletins will also be available for anyone to read on the website.

EDUCATION OTHERWISE BUSINESS

The E.O. Internet Discussion List

EO now has an internet discussion list which already has several members. It is organised by Janet Wilkinson who gives the following info on how to subscribe: "Go to the front page of the EO website: scroll down to the "Join eo's list" box and type in your e-mail address. From there you will go straight to the right list and you'll be guided through joining e-groups if you are not already a member."

The EO List was originally intended to be a fairly low volume discussion forum for HE matters. However, as usual, the email mad members have discussed many other topics including making use of the EO List to hold virtual council meetings!! Already the Agenda for the Open Council Meeting (York - 27 August) and the minutes of the last one (Stokes Barn - 3 June) have been posted. For those of you interested in virtual discussions, why not give the EO List a try?

LOCAL CONTACT UPDATE

Resignation Belinda Devon N.

New Acting Local Contacts

Brighton & Hove Angie Weyers
Surrey Lyndsay Wheeler
Tyne & Wear Marlene Dawson

Change of address: Celia McDonagh 169
Habershon St. Splott Cardiff CS 24 2LA
02920 218160

Areas needing a Local Contact

Carmarthanshire, Channel Islands, Cheshire,
North/East Devon, South Gloucestershire,
Gwynedd, Hertfordshire, Isle of Man, North
Manchester, Powys, Strathclyde, Tayside, N.
Yorkshire

First contact with EO

A long time ago it was agreed that all Local Contacts should be currently involved in educating at least one child from home. However it has been suggested that there is a difference between LC's who send children into the school system and those with children who have just grown up. Do you want your Local Contact to be actively home educating? Should the Local Contact be asked to stand down and move on to another role within EO once their last child has reached 19 or starts full time work whichever is reached first or should they be able to continue? Should there be an upper limit on the number of years that a LC can be in place without the post being re-advertised? Maybe 10 years? What do you think? Please let me have feedback since it will be discussed at the AGM in January.

e-mail addresses of Local Contacts: please let me know if you have one that I have not yet used.

Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178 E-mail
isobelb@cheerful.com

E.O. Regional Gathering - Penrith Cumbria

**Saturday 25th November 2000
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

Key note speaker, Children's
activities,

Discussion groups, Update on Scottish
situation, Legal workshop, Resources
purchase/ exchange, Lot of home
educators from the local area to talk
to.

Cost: Adults £3 Children £1

For further information contact Sarah
Cook.

S.A.E. to: **The Old Cottage, Croglin,
Carlisle, Cumbria, CA4 9RZ**
Phone: 01768 896019

E-mail: sarah@croggies.freemove.co.uk

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

www.zednetdemo.co.uk/2eddin

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: For event information.

Contact: Nicky Forster 01625 869719.

Or see Manchester or Staffordshire

CLEVELAND & DURHAM

Anyone interested in setting up a new group

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

Ice skating at Plymouth Pavillions Wednesdays at 12pm.

Contact: Pat Stoolman 01626 854592

South Devon: meetings every Wednesday

Contact: Corine 01626 361856

Penny 01626 360640

Carole 01364 643956

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

Thursday 12.30-3 Parkstone Boys and Girls Club, Recreation Rd, Parkstone, Poole. Indoor area, basketball and playground. Also meeting other Thursdays for activities and outings

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 Cottey 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

HAMPSHIRE

Portsmouth EO Play, Learn, Enjoy. Warm and welcoming group with kids 5-15 meet Fridays for art, craft, music and chat, also local outings.

Contact: Julie Chappell 01705 640242

ACTIVEO meet 3 times a week within 20 mile radius of Petersfield. All welcome.

For introductory newsletter send SAE:

ACTIVEO c/o 30 Spring Rd, Sarisbury Green, Hants SO30 7FH kaydaywest@dircon.co.uk
Chichester 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

Deborah Bull 01705 587868

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

Contact: Alison or Nicholas 0170 3 283727

Southampton: New club for teenagers and older kids. Friendly and welcoming. Fortnightly, next meeting Fri. 13th October 10am-1pm

Contact: Anita 023 8049 8840

HANTS/WEST SUSSEX

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

Contact: Edward 01243 528508

ed@bevmat.demon.co.uk

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

Isle of Wight Learning Zone has workshops and social events several times a week

Contact: Shara 01983 822965

Alison 01983 810862

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,

Bromley New group starting the first Tuesday in September 12-3

Contact: Claire Wade 0181 460 7347

claire@wadefamily99.freemove.co.uk

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

Outings and Get-togethers, for information

Contact: Brenda or Diana 01254 389673

LEICESTERSHIRE

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

Contact: Lise 0116 242 5802

LINCOLNSHIRE

1st and 3rd Monday of the month (including bank holidays and school holidays) 1pm -3pm.

Meeting in Cleethorpes in church hall.

Contact: Caroline: 01472 690738

Informal group for chatting and playing,

Boston/Spalding/Sleaford area.

If this group is still happening could Chris Stevens contact me with current phone number, thanks.

LONDON

Tuesdays - Clissold Park for socialising and support. Current ages 1-8 yrs but all welcome.

Contact: Charlotte 0207 254 0419

Wednesdays -Honor Oak playground.

Contact: Keith Hertog 0181 776 859

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 6370

E-mail: shan@hagonline.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. **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?

Contact: Gil Wilson 0161 442 8723

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

Contact: Karen 01204 573136

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

Also monthly reading group for over 10's at Manley Park

Contact: Julie 0161 860 7589

MADCOW news-sheet Free. Send stamped addressed envelopes to Gill Wilson, 20

BrookRoad, Heaton Chapel, Stockport SK4 5BZ.

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

NOTTINGHAM

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

Contact: Wendy 0115 9114312

Louise 001773 780634

East Midlands Christian Home Educators 1st

Tuesday of the month 10am-2pm Stapleford Baptist Church, Stapleford, Nottingham. Fun, support and group activities.

Contact: Jo Dunn 0115 8770281

Julia Terry 0115 8494083

OXFORD

Weekly meetings - 267 Marston Rd.

Classes in Art, (all ages) Philosophy (over 8's) German, (all ages). **Fortnightly**, Science Theory & Speakers Corner.

Monthly, parents meetings

Contact: Wendy Plested 01865 514973

SCOTLAND

Central Scotland: Sale of secondhand educational books for all ages. Great bargains!

Contact: Penny Veitch 01786 825171
veitchfamily@compuserve.com

Irvine: weekly drama workshops Fridays, for ages 5-9 and 9+.

Contact: Rhona 01294 273644

Ayr: Bead craft workshop, over 10's

Contact: Anne 01292 441060

Glasgow: Scottish newspaper visit in November

Contact: Claire 01294 272303

Monthly activities at Eglinton Country Park,

Wednesday afternoons under 10's

Contact: Shirley 01563 540063

Other visits coming up in the new year so watch this space or

Contact: Vivien 01563 537428

STAFFORDSHIRE/SOUTH

CHESHIRE/NORTH SALOP

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

Contact: Patricia 01785 851150

Stafford: Every 2nd and 4th Wednesday

meeting in village hall for crafts, games etc.

12-3.30pm.

Contact: Nicola 01785 612410

Alsager: 1st Wednesday of month at Y.P.C.C.

for crafts, music, drama, games and chat.

Contact: Caroline 01270 875 633

Sue 01270 88 39 78. Suedavies@tesco.net

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

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 for 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. Suggestions and new families welcome.

Contact: Dawn 01495 303468

WARWICKSHIRE

Coventry and Warwickshire area meetings usually 2 Thursdays a month. Activity meetings

at Binley Woods and variety of outings, plus famous Christmas Party. See HELM newsletter

Contact: Sue Cardus 024 7654 3801
suecardus@aol.com

WEST MIDLANDS

Fortnightly meetings at Coseley with a planned calendar of activities and workshops e.g. music & drama. Monthly Science Club (BAYS),

resource centre, time for discussion, socialising and support. All home educators welcome.

Contact: Penny Clarke 01922 745465
pennyclarke@homeschool.freemove.co.uk

Joy Beasley 0121 585 6450

JoyBeasley@b-bunch.freemove.co.uk

Regular meetings and events throughout the region. Full details in our newsletter, HELM £7.20 per year.

WILTS/DORSET/HAMPS

Outings and visits every Tuesday pm Lower Street Hall, off Netherhampton Rd, Salisbury. 2-5pm every 1st Tuesday.

Contact: *Vicky Slater 01722 324863*

Sam Moody 01794 342041

WORCESTERSHIRE

Regular activity meetings and outings in the north Worcestershire area,

Contact: *Gail Tatcher 01562 822034.*

email gail@tqmi.co.uk

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 jemmergram@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)

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 - 4.00at Moortown Baptist Church, King Lane, Leeds.

£2.50 per family

Contact: *Eva 01535 274520 Susan 0113 268 1137*

Swimming (term time, occasionally, phone first), Tuesdays at Bradford

Contact: *Eva 1535 274520*

Huddersfield Sports Centre

Contact: *Tracey 01484 317176*

Skating Fridays (except the week of the Leeds meeting)

Contact: *Francis 01274 884750*

Membership Secretary Needed

EO has a gap in its network of regional membership secretaries. A new person is needed for the South-east. The job is a postal one, sending out packs to new members on receipt of their application form. Work load varies seasonally, with a rough guide of between 6 and 20 packs per month. Please phone Pam Bellinger on 01604 686521.

Advertisement

The Trojan Scheme

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HE Resource List: <http://members.aol.com/wiseowlsw/resource.htm>

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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](mailto:UK-HOME-ED-REQUEST@LISTSERV.AOL.COM) for info.

RESOURCES BOOKLET

50 page booklet giving information on
different curriculum materials available to home
educators who are interested in a more
structured approach. For a copy please send a 1
coin to cover printing and postage, with your
address to: H. Turnbull, Hall Lodge,
Biddenden Rd, Headcorn, Ashford, Kent,
TN27 9JD.

Free electronic rtf. copy, e-mail me
at: julian.turnbullbtinternet.com

Comments about it include "very useful
indeed"; "what a lot of information"; "we really
enjoyed reading your booklet"

Chemicals and chemical equipment
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FREE to anyone in E.O. Would have to
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Small EO family run static caravan site with touring pitches right next to a beautiful sandy beach. Local shops, restaurants and pubs within easy walking distance.

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For price list and information contact:
Tony and Jos Underhill, The Leas, Beach
Park, Mill Lane, Bacton
Norwich, NR12 0HS
01692 652115

To place an advert...

Advertising in the newsletter is free, but if you are running a business or hoping to profit from your advert, please send an appropriate donation.

Cheques should be made payable to "Education Otherwise". Remember that EO is run entirely by volunteers and has no income except members' subscriptions. Adverts should be limited to 1/8th page or 50 words and sent (with any donation) to the advertising editor.

All 'permanent' adverts will now appear in alternate issues. If any advertisers have a preference about which issues they appear in please contact the advertising editor.

BACK PAGE PART TWO

Get involved and join a Small Group.

Finance

Priscilla Park Weir, Lynda Hitchman, Celia McDonagh, Ann Samuel Till, Ken Grindley

Enquiries

Gary Podmore, Pam Bellinger, Janet Wilkinson, Priscilla Park Weir

Publications

Jill Fisher, Gary Podmore, Lucy Charlton, Chris Harper, Ali Willer

Media

Liz Alderdice, Beverley Young, Eva O'Rorke, Fiona Brookes, Celia McDonagh, Janet Wilkinson, Belinda Harris-Reid

Business Practice Group

Jill Fisher, Priscilla Park Weir, Martine Archer, Gwen Baldock

DfEE Team

Anne Wade, Jill Fisher, Gwen Baldock,

Membership Support

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

Isobel Bogucki, Christine Adey,

Local Groups

Janet Wilkinson, Priscilla Park Weir, Julie Eaton, Julie Ridley, Penny Clarke

Communications

Janet Wilkinson, Jill Fisher, Priscilla Park Weir, Richard Eaton, Penny Clarke

New volunteers for any of the groups most welcome, with expertise or just an interest. For more information contact any of the council members listed (in bold) or Janet Wilkinson (General Secretary).

Media Contacts

Please contact one of the following people if you would like to volunteer to be interviewed or are contacted by the media and would like help/advice/support on giving an interview.

Scotland: Liz Alderdice 01464841489

ejid@alders99.freeserve.co.uk

North West: Beverley Young 01772 734314

beverley.young@btinternet.com

North East: Eva O'Rorke 01535 274520

evaandmary@aol.com

Midlands: Fiona Brookes 01684290087

brookes@openhorizons.screaming.net

Wales: Celia McDonagh 01633 669104

East Anglia: Janet Wilkinson 01733554436

eo_database@ndirect.co.uk

South West: Belinda Harris-Reid 01364 643343

bline@compuserve.com

South East: Vacant

London (1): Vacant

London (2): Vacant

Ireland: Vacant

(Volunteers needed for these areas)

More Useful Contacts

Complaints (acting): Celia McDonagh, 169

Habershon St. Splott, Cardiff Tel: 029 2021

8160 or **Beverley Young** 01772 734314

beverley.young@btinternet.com

Council Members

If you have a problem contact your nearest council member:

Geraldine Adams (North London) 0171 2634922
Christine Adey (Dorset) 01258 880355
Jude Ashley-Walker (Isle of Wight) 01983 531680
Pam Bellinger (Northants) 01604 686521
Isobel Bogucki (West Sussex) 01403 261178
Lynda Hitchman (Berkshire) 0118 961 4466
Jill Fisher (Leics) 0116 2128120
Sue Hutchin (Kent) 01233 820008
Priscilla Park-Weir (Surrey) 0845 458 3085
priscilla.park-weir@racalgroup.co.uk
Gary Podmore (Yorks) 0114 2585702
Eleanor Stapleton (London-North) 0181 8841368
Jenny Stevens (West Sussex) 01243 783 469
Anne Wade (London Middx) 0181 904 7155
Bruce Wallace (Highlands)
Janet Wilkinson (Cambs) 01733 554436
Beverley Young (Lancs) 01772 734314
beverley.young@btinternet.com

Membership

Membership and newsletter subscription queries, membership cards, and address changes.

Lynda Hitchman, 31 Audley St., Reading, Berks RG30 1BP Tel: 0118 961 4466
database@education-otherwise.org

Stationery

Leaflets, posters, membership forms, and car stickers

Ali Willer, 28, Cozens-Hardy Road, Sprowston, Norwich NR7 8QF (*Donations towards postage and printing welcomed, reuse labels £2.50 per 100 -free for EO business use*)

Publications

Books, information leaflets and back issues of newsletters. For a full list send an SAE to:

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, Lammas, 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 and Teenagers: Geraldine Adams Tel: 0171 263 4922

02072634922
Autonomous Education Support and Advice: Sammy and Nick Vidal-Hall, Home Croft, Brownston St, Modbury, Devon PL21 0QR.
Tel. 01548 830 716

GCSE Contact: Wendy Pleased
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: (vacant)

General Secretary (acting): Janet Wilkinson, 31 Framlingham Road, Peterborough PE2 8UG Tel: 01733 554436

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

Media Coordinator: (vacant)

Newsletter Coordinator (acting): Christine Adey, 1 Dunbury Cottages, Milton Abbas, Dorset DT11 0DH Tel: 01258 880355

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

Enquiries Secretaries Coordinator: Geraldine Adams Tel: 0171 263 4922

Membership Secretaries Coordinator: Pam Bellinger, 9 Main Road, Kelmarsh, Northampton NN6 9LY Tel 01604 686521

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:
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LONDON N9 9SG

HELPLINE 0870 7300074

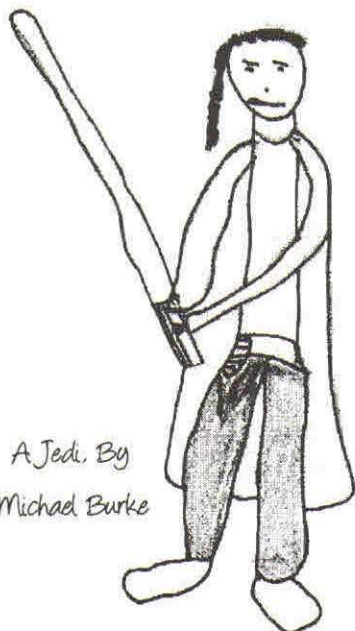
<<http://www.education-otherwise.org>>

Education Otherwise Association Ltd, Registered Charity No. 1055120



Children's Pages

Issue 136, Edited by Heather McDonald,
7 Clover Ave, Bedford, MK41 0ST



A Jedi. By
Michael Burke

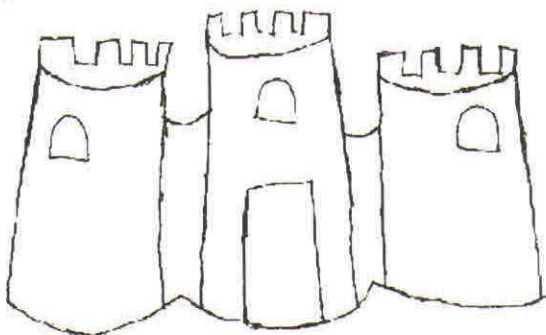


A sheep ↑ and a pig ↓
by Robert Hallet (3½)



**We went to Camber
Castle near Rye.
There were lots of
places to hide. It
was built by Henry
VIII. Now the sea is
miles away.**

By Jessica Hallet (7)



Notes for contributors Drawings should be in **Black and White only**. Please include your full name, age, county with each contribution. If you would like to edit the Children's Pages, contact the Newsletter Co-ordinator.

The editor of the next issue is:

Shelly Williams, 145 Robertson Rd, Eastville, Bristol, BS5 6LB

Pen Pals



Hi! My name is Ronan Craggs and I'm 1 and a bit years old. I like messing around with my ball, playing in my car and making funny noises with my mouth. I'm an only child and would like a penpal under the age of 4. So please write to me at: 63 East Lane, Stainforth, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN7 5DY



Hi, my name is Katie. I am 6. I would like a girl pen pal around 6. My hobbies are horse riding and writing. Write to: Katie, 50 The Causeway, Isleham, Ely, Cambs. CB7 5SZ



Hi, my name is Joe Moore and I'm 6 years old. I like Pokemon cards, football, music, riding my bike and playing with my mates. I have got brothers Josh, 11 and Jake, 12. So please write to me at 63 East Lane, Stainforth, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN7 5DY



My name is Rickie, I am 8 years old. I have only been taught at home for 3 months, I left school because of being bullied. I would like to write and exchange pictures with boys of 4 to 8 years old. I like Pokemon trading, Playstation games, animals and wildlife. Write to: Rickie Hide, 29 Portway Lane, Wexminster, Wiltshire, BA12 8FD



Hi! My name is Róisín, I am 10 years old and I would like a pen pal of any age. I like reading Harry Potter books, old fashioned and magical books, fairies, astrology, story tapes, Brownies, drawing, making things, sewing, puzzles, Irish dancing, history, achery, camping, woods, horses, animals, wild life, cooking and eating vegetarian food. I haven't got a T.V. and I don't like pop music. Best of all I love nattering and talking nonsense to my baby sister and getting letters in the post, HINT, HINT. Write to: Róisín Howard, Point cottage, Dale Hill, Tice Hurst, Wadhurst, East Sussex. TN5 7DG



Hi, my name is Kirsty Angharad Newell. I'm 11 years old and I would like pen pals m/f age 11-13. I like B*witched and S Club 7. I also like watching the Simpsons on TV. Write to: 10 Burnedge Fold Road, Grasscroft, Saddleworth, Oldham, Lancs. OL4 4EE



Hello my name is Sioned, I'm 12 years old, I'm Welsh and would love to have a pen pal from anywhere. I love listening to music especially Vengaboys and Stereophonics. I love to sing, dance, read, write and loads more. E-mail me at jrob5819@aol.com or write to: Sioned Roberts, Glasfryn, Llithfaen, Pwllheli, Gwynedd, LL53 6NW P.S. I will reply to every e-mail or letter.



Hi, my name's Laura and I am 12. I live in Codford in Wiltshire. I would like to meet girls/boys around my age in the Wiltshire area as friends. Please write to: Laura Dawson, 72 High St, Codford, Wiltshire, BA12 0ND or E-mail: LauraD@rdawson.fsnet.co.uk



Hi, Jo here! I am a fun loving girl of 12 years old! I love animals, art, swimming and Westlife. I am not overkeen on sports and I am interested in Wicca. I would like a female pen pal any age above 10 with the same interests. Please write soon! Reply guaranteed: Jo Anderton, 10 Tracks Lane, Billiney, Wigan, Lancs, WN5 7BL



Hi, my name is Jessica Newell and I'm 14 years old. If you like Boyzone, Westlife, The Corrs, writing long letters, live outside of the UK and you are 14 or older get writing to: Jessica Newell, 10 Burnedge Fold Road, Grasscroft, Saddleworth, Oldham, Lancashire, O14 4EE, England.



Hi, I'm Alice (age 14). I have been out of school for about six months and I would like to find boys/girls 14+ to write to. My hobbies are playing guitar, going to gigs and festivals and martial arts. Some of the bands I like are Nirvana, Smashing Pumpkins, Bush, Pearl Jam, Slipknot, dEUS, Marilyn Manson, Korn and Coal Chamber. Write to: 113 Piffon St, Barnstaple, N. Devon, EX31 1PG



Hi, my name is Kirsty and I am 14. I enjoy cycling, reading magazines, listening to music and learning dance routines. I would like a pen pal aged 14-16 m/f. Write to: Kirsty North, 30 Oswald Rd, Moordown, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH9 2TQ



Hi, My name is Louise Cutler, I would love a pen pal from E.O. I love reading, writing, walking and playing with my pets. My favourite pop groups are S. Club 7 and Westlife, I suppose I like modern music. I would like a pen pal m/f, any age!! Write to: Canworthy Villa, Canworthy Water, Launceston, Cornwall, PL15 8UW



PET PALS



Hi! Hi! We are two very pretty female rats. Any cool rats out there write to: Tasie + Tamri, The Tank, The Lounge, Freeman Family, The Old Chapel, Treleddid Fawr, St. Davids, Pembrokeshire, SA62 2PP



Hi, my name's Ruby-Melasynda. I'm a friendly mixed terrier :o) I like swimming in the river at the bottom of the garden, food and long walks. I'm 9 years old and looking for some m/f pet friends. 100% replies to all letters. Write to: Ruby-Melasynda Dawson, Laura Dawson, 72 High St, Codford, Wiltshire, BA12 0ND

Full name and address of the contributor (not the pet) must be included for petpals.

TALKING WALL



This wall is for any E.O. child to use. You can send messages (for example to people you don't know how to contact otherwise), make suggestions (for example Anthea Axten suggested this wall), ask questions, state facts or just say hello to your friends. To put something on the talking wall just send it to the next editor (address & details in the current children's pages).

Hi there! My name is Elinor and I collect jokes. Please post or e-mail any amusing jokes to the following address and I will send you some in return. Write to: Elinor Tuffnell, The Vicarage, Low Road, Wretton, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE22 9QSA. Or e-mail: elinor@tuffnell.free-online.co.uk

Hello, anyone out there in the Saddleworth/Oldham area aged around 14, m/f who would like to meet up, make friends, and do stuff like go shopping and meet at each others houses to chat and things like that. Please contact Jessica Newell, 10 Burnedge Fold Road, Grasscroft, Saddleworth, Oldham, Lancashire, OL4 4EE



**Childline:
0800 1111**



A huge hello to my special pen friend Naomi Johnson from Derbyshire. Thanks for the lovely post cards. I wish you lots of luck and happiness in your new bungalow in Skegness. Best wishes and luv from your pen pal, Laura D



ALICE HOOL from Peterborough, you didn't send me your name or address!!! From Catherine Clegg, 57 Bury Old Road, Ainsworth, Bolton, BL2 5SD



**Kidscape: 020 7730 3300 (London)
01273 557 133 (Brighton)**