

# Education Otherwise



February 2002 No. 144

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Thanks to Jo and Amie for cover picture

### **Co-ordinatorial**

In September 2001 my son Dan started a GNVQ course at North Devon College. He was 16 last May, had decided not to do any GCSEs (or anything at all which would be recognisable as formal education), but we went along to an open day and he chatted to staff from the Computing Department, who seemed pleased to have him on board anyway. So (Rose having left home to start an independent grown-up life a couple of years ago) I no longer have any home-educated children, which feels rather strange and unreal. Part of the person I've been for so many years is no more. The good bit, of course, is that there's no worry about what will happen if the LEA find out about us - we simply didn't tell them when we moved down here last year, and although I'd developed a range of strategies for keeping them off our backs and out of our home over the years, it was good to have the respite.

I've lost count of how many times I asked myself if I was doing the right thing, because our home-based education sometimes felt so limited and frustrating - then I would remember how it was when my daughter started secondary school: she stayed up till midnight struggling with impossibly open-ended homework, didn't eat lunch because by the time she got there all the vegetarian stuff had gone, came home covered in bruises because she wouldn't join the "top gang"

so automatically became their enemy and protector-of-lame-ducks (who were all a good deal bigger than she was), stopped singing, lost interest in her pets, began to hate "art" though she had loved drawing and painting since she was a toddler, turned into a little grey stick of a zombie - whatever mess I made of it, had to be better than that.

Yet some parts of this supposedly United Kingdom (see Ann's report from Scotland, page 16) are still in the 'Dark Ages' where parents are obliged to seek permission from the LEA to withdraw children from state school. I can remember the frustration, anger and helplessness which that engendered. At one point, having withdrawn my children without permission and continuing to refuse home visits, and having exhausted my repertoire of cogent arguments on legal and philosophical points, I felt that the only thing left was to go for all-out confrontation, let them take me to court and make the most of the publicity - then I thought "but if I end up in prison, what happens to my children?" In the end, the regulations in England were changed in the nick of time to avoid my having to make that decision - I have to admit that, as well as the relief, I felt a little disappointed at missing the fight; but it's not something I'd wish on anyone.

One thing I'm still sure of is that I don't want to give in on the principle (that as a parent I am the expert on my own children and their needs) by simply finding ever more ingenious ways to cope with the regulations. Those are important as a safeguard for individual families, but I believe EO as an organisation, and every individual member, has a part to play in making sure that the arguments are heard high places, ensure that our rights are protected. I am very grateful to those who take the initiative on this - one such is Ann Samuel Till who has been working continuously since Christmas, on behalf of home educators both in Scotland and in the rest of the UK, in response to the draft guidelines for LEAs.

I am outside the scope of the Scottish regulations on two counts: I don't live there and my children are over 16. From my position of safety, all I can do to support this campaign is write letters - what a bore! Oh well, I'd better get on with it. Let's hope the pen really will prove mightier than the sword!

*Ann, 12 January 2002*

## STRUCTURE IN EDUCATION

A few people may be wondering why I am following my piece on autonomous education (December 2001 Newsletter) with a piece on more formal education.

Quite simple really, someone suggested it but no-one else had the time to do it; I didn't either but thought that maybe I could link the two together, here goes.....

*The first piece is from Steev Stamford, Local Contact for Derbyshire:-*

We consider our approach to home education as 'structured with flexibility'; let me explain. I'm a housewife (or should that be househusband?) and Jane is the working partner. As her hours are 6AM till 2PM (in theory at least) we have organised our day so that the mornings are regarded as 'learning time' and the afternoons are 'freetime' as by then we are all together again and can enjoy family time whilst there is still daylight. I have a variety of part time jobs that occupy about half of my evenings and also work for myself as a web site author which I fit in whenever there is time. We have organised our working lives around the need to take care of our children.

We pay a lot of attention to Maths and English because we believe that with those two basic things in place it is possible to learn via the traditional academic path of research. To help us we use books from W H Smiths and Letts which are clear, colourful and quite often fun too, they are also Key stage graded which means we get reminded of what we have forgotten to cover.

We do not insist on learning new things via traditional academic means, we just believe that in equipping them to use that path it is one more that is open to them; the 'suck it and see' approach is great fun, and finding out why things don't work is often more educational than finding out why they do. That said I find it hard to let them spend a lot of time on something I know will not work, I normally have to bury myself in something else whilst they are trying whatever the current theory is. We do not intend that the children should go back to school, but mindful that the future is an unknown we try to ensure that the education we facilitate means that both are at least equal to 'national standards' so if a return to school was ever necessary it would be made easier. As we also have doubting parents we feel the need (yes it's sad I know) to defend our corner and demonstrate that good progress is being made.

In short we use from AM through until 1 PM as our 'learning time', and other than making sure we cover some Maths and English during the week somewhere, the rest of the time is largely devoted to whatever we find interesting at the time. Sometimes we have days when what we are doing is so much fun we just carry on, sometimes we make such great progress we can be finished by mid morning, sometimes it's such hard work we just accept that today is not a good day and give up, to return sometime later. If the weather is nice we may well go out regardless of the day of the week or time of day, if it's particularly grotty out we may continue our learning until later in the day or week. We do not keep any account of extra or missed days or hours, it just happens.

Perhaps we need a new subset, the 'semi structured', then again maybe not. There are thousands of children being home educated and I'm sure there are as many ways of providing an education and the best thing about EO is that we all agree on this simple fact.

*Steev & Jane Stamford, Phillip (10) & Flossy (8) who have now been out of school for 3 years.*

*The next piece is from a Canadian Homeschooling family living in London:-*

### **Suiting the Child**

A lot of people have the wrong idea about structured home education. They have visions of children lined up in their desks while Mom rings a little bell to begin math class perhaps. Or they imagine the spirits of the children withering under the pressure of forced academics, spending hours hunched over workbooks while their autonomous counterparts frolic out of doors. Fortunately those who engage in structured home education realise that there are varying degrees of structure and standing over their children whip in hand is often not the best way to get good academic results and raise happy children.

We are eclectic homeschoolers. Even that label means different things. For us it means that I design a flexible curriculum based on my daughter's interests, that will challenge her at various levels. History, science, spelling, writing, grammar, art and geography are all woven into our daily reading, discussion and 'assignments'. Since my daughter gets frustrated with written work we use dictation for longer pieces. I incorporate a lot of art into our 'program' so that she can demonstrate her understanding through her artwork instead of through writing. Most of our 'seat work' is spent on the couch with a book between us. I read aloud and we discuss what we're reading. Abbie never really stops asking questions or making hypotheses so we have some pretty interesting (and long) discussions. She does a lot of independent reading and though I don't assign her books I find that she tends to focus her non-fiction reading to the topic we happen to be studying. I guess our degree of structure isn't crushing the love of learning out of her yet. Her two favourites at the moment are Hillyer's '*A Child's History of the World*' and Usborne's '*World History*' book.

Mathematics is our most structured subject. We use a great curriculum that emphasises concepts rather than rote memorisation. It really gets into how and why things work instead of simply making children fill in the blanks. It also moves along at a pace that Abbie enjoys. It took a lot of research and a little bit of trial and error to find a math curriculum that was right for Abbie, but that's what is great about homeschooling in general. Different approaches can be tried out until one fits.

We try to begin at about 8am each morning, though that varies depending on the day and on who's doing what. Once everything I've planned is finished we've usually taken about 2 hours. Sometimes it runs slightly over, especially if she's working on a piece of writing, or if she gets caught up in her art work. Abbie has the rest of the day to spend as she wishes. Since we don't watch TV that usually includes building with lego, reading, playing with math manipulatives, playing with her brother, her dog, her dolls, running outside, climbing the tree, cooking with me, or pulling out all of her arts and craft supplies and creating things.

Autonomous educators often think they've cornered the market on children who love to learn throughout their days, but I feel that Abbie's unstructured time is just as valuable as her structured time. Just last week we were baking in the kitchen and Abbie spent 15 minutes telling me all about how if you split half cups into two you get quarter cups, if you split quarter cups into two you get one eighth cups, and so on. Seems that having a curriculum hasn't stopped her from enjoying math. And on Sunday she spent the early morning reading Greek Myths and the afternoon reading her two books on world history. So yes, children will initiate their own educational discoveries even if they do have some structure.

Another thing to keep in mind is that some children want/need a certain amount of structure. My daughter is not one of those kids who would have been happy to pick up reading on her own. She wanted me to teach her the fundamentals and then she wanted to be left alone to master it. I spent most of a year teaching her how to read. We used a book called, 'Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons.' It was exactly what Abbie needed, the lessons were short, fun, and to the point. At lesson 62 she realised she could read 'Go Dog Go' on her own so we stopped the lessons for a while, then Christmas happened and by the time January was over she asked to start again. Once she finished with the lessons she needed only a little more assistance until she was at a point where she was ready to take on reading without my help.

Funnily enough, having structure hasn't prevented Abbie's learning from coming in leaps and bounds, it hasn't put her off any of the topics we've studied, it hasn't caused a deep-seated hatred of mathematics, it hasn't harmed her self-motivation, it hasn't crushed her insatiable appetite to learn. Being structured doesn't stop us from learning about the world in the real world, it doesn't stop us from interacting with our community or with nature, it doesn't stop us from making discoveries together or on our own. We don't stay home all day with our heads buried in books. We like to get out and experience things first hand. The beauty of designing my own curriculum is that I can build on Abbie's interests and get her input on the topics she wants to study and the types of things she wants to do. It is completely tailored to her interests and ability, and moves along at a pace that works for her.

I'm not going to spend a lot of time trying to convince you that structured learning is the only way to develop self-motivation and a passion for learning, or any other number of positive attributes usually touted as results of unstructured learning. I believe that all children are individuals and that different approaches work best for different people. Our degree of structure works best for both my daughter and me. I've met families who are a lot more structured than we are and yet, amazingly, their children are just as inquisitive and self-directed as my daughter. One thing I love about homeschooling is that there are so many ways to go about it. I find that by keeping an open mind I have learned so much from others who do things far differently than myself. There is no one 'right' way to home educate that will produce happy children who are passionate about learning. There are many approaches that work, the key is finding the right one to suit the child.

*Sarah, David, Abbie (5 years old), and Jacob (20 months) Bennett Sjabennett@aol.com*

*The next piece is from a family who would like to maintain their privacy, it gives an interesting look at why and how different people home educate:-*

## **STRUCTURE, WHATEVER THAT IS?**

When I read about the subject for this issue's special section I had to have a long think about whether the things that form part of our education could be called 'structured'.

I was a bit disappointed to see a structured education described by Roland Meighan as 'Authoritarian' as this rather conjures up an image of parents standing over their hard-working offspring with a big stick and a scowl!

The other thing that jumped out at me was the comment that 'Autonomous education really means the automatic education received whilst living one's life.' In the course of my life I have learnt lots and lots of things. Some by doing them, some by watching others do them, but lots of things I have learnt by reading about them. Often things completely unrelated to my life, but interesting for their own sake. Some things I was given to read at school and lots of others I just read because I wanted to. I read all the time, all sorts of things.

When I started to teach my daughter at home, after long struggles with a school education, I very quickly realised that reading and also writing were not easy for her. A diagnosis of dyslexia meant that we had to look at different ways of going about an education. This is where the 'structured' bit comes in!

At 13, my daughter has already made decisions about what she wants to do in order to earn money when she is a little older. (Choosing a career path would be a posher way of describing it!). We have done some research together and learnt that she needs to pass 3 GCSEs, one of which must be English, to achieve her goal and be accepted on to the college course she has chosen. I disagree strongly with this system of exams as I don't think it is a level playing field for children with learning difficulties but it is a system we have to live with for now and other options are few.

So some of our day needs to be spent doing what would be called a 'structured education' so that E can achieve her goals. We use textbooks to find out the things we need to know. I read them to E and we discuss them together. We don't do a lot of written work as this is still very difficult. Because E seldom reads by choice, as it is not something she finds easy, there are many things we wouldn't have learnt about without having to make a more conscious effort. For instance, her Science book gave details about how the eye works. This has led into learning about light, experimenting with a prism, finding out how a camera works etc. If we hadn't sat down and read the basic information in the first place then I am not sure we would have gone on to learn the rest in the course of our everyday lives. I expect there are many of you out there who will disagree with me! Perhaps had we started on home ed earlier we might have discovered things in some other way. If E didn't have so many negative experiences of reading and learning things may have been different but after years wasted at school we have so little time left that without a little structure we would never fit it all in!

Having said that, we still only 'work' for 2 to 3 hours, 3 or 4 days a week. The rest of E's time is her own, as it would not be if she were at school. Also we only intend to work on 3 to 4 GCSEs over the next 2 years, in the subjects of her choosing (apart from English!). If she were at school she would have to study for many more, in things that maybe didn't interest her at all.

So this for us is what 'structure' means: looking ahead to see where you want to get to, planning a way of getting there and then following the plan with adaptations and diversions along the way as things crop up we hadn't thought of or we meander off from the 'National Curriculum' for a while into more interesting backwaters. The 'structure' is just the bare bones of what we do but I find it helpful all the same.

*Name and address supplied.*

### Another view of structure:-

Having been a member of Education Otherwise for a number of years I have read with interest the personal articles sent in by other home educators but until now have not felt that I needed to contribute. I read as usual the December issue particularly the Autonomous Education section and found myself questioning the whole of my home education experience once again. So I decided to put some questions to our fellow home educators.

I have been home educating our first son, who is now 10, all his life. He has never attended any form of outside education. We did in the first few years use a structured approach quite rigidly to accommodate our first son's academic ability and interest. This was fine until child number two arrived, then three and four. The four-year age gap meant our first son had lots of time and attention given to his structure.

We now find ourselves in a very different situation: our second son should have started the "official" school two years ago, so in the same structured approach we tried to teach our second son. This has not worked quite so well due to lack of juggling ability of their mother who although trying to be super mum just cannot seem to do everything at the same time for everyone.

On discussion with the now ten-year-old son we decided to try a more relaxed approach so a project based idea was formed where he chose, researched and compiled a complete project. This lasted through two projects. The novelty wore off and and it was back to trying to juggle structure.

Our structure consisted of working on given subjects to a timetable starting at ten a.m. My husband started university this year, (proving you are never too old) but this has meant that I now have no help with the two under fives while I am trying to do a structured day with the over fives. This of course is chaos and finally came to a head in November whilst trying to read with our five year old (his request): he did not get two words out before someone needed something, and a request of "mummy I need the potty" simply cannot be ignored without horrible consequences.

I then decided to try a much more relaxed attitude to learning and let our children lead the way. Since this time we have had requests for computer games and videos. This I find very hard to sit back and just allow every waking moment of the day, so I am asking myself and anyone else who can help: how is it possible to continue a structured approach under these circumstances? If an autonomous approach is better suited to our situation then how is it possible to achieve motivation without coercion? Is it possible to educate very different personalities using the same method?

I have also had to think hard upon how much of the state learning is still in my blood. Do I educate structurally because that is all I know? I do believe that learning to read and write and to use numbers is vital in our society and has proven to be very valuable to our sons who can find any information required by children but now I am confused. Does everyone have periods of doubt and confusion? If any family has found a way to educate four or more children using a mixture of autonomous and structured learning I would dearly love to hear from them.

*Julie Chapman-Maurice Taldrwrst Farm Anglesey North Wales LL61 6YF*

### *A final word from myself:-*

As for formal education in my life: I was formally educated and only started to learn after I had left school aged 16. My daughter, Amie, has Flute lessons but even they are very informal. Amie did go to school until she was 12 and yet the important things that she learnt in life were learnt at home without instruction. Amie loved to read books and have books read to her. At the age of 4 she would let me know if I had missed out a word in one of her favourite books and would spend hours producing pages of pretend writing consisting of lots of wiggly lines. Her imagination worked overtime and she would 'read' the story to anyone prepared to listen, from the pages of wiggly lines.

Had Amie never gone to school I may have tried to formalise what we did, by the time she came out of school she had become so damaged by their type of formal education. After a couple of attempts at a more formalised style of learning, we found we could only live together in peace and harmony if we embraced a totally autonomous approach to learning. It has worked for us; we are both learning without trying, without tears of frustration and without great expense!

There are areas in life where we need structure, learning to drive for instance. To pass a driving test you need to know the Highway Code, someone else has dictated what we need to know and has set an exam paper – pure structure. We accept this because we want to drive. There are many other areas that we are happy to take instruction in because we can see that we need some instruction there. Cooking is one area in which most people will at some time have used instruction, in the form of a recipe book. We may not always stick to the recipe and will often adapt it to suit our needs but there is no getting away from the fact that we needed the initial instruction.

There is one area in which instruction, in my view, will never work, that is in school. To put a group of 30 children of the same age into a room and expect them to learn at the same pace is idiotic at best and will never work for the majority.

I would like to say that we are all individuals and must do what is right for ourselves and our families. I would like to dismiss the idea that you can only be 'autonomous' or 'structured', that you can only mix with others who follow the same path. I personally welcome all people into my life, most, if not all of the people I know are kind, considerate individuals. Yet some of them have very different views on education and life. What they all have in common is that they are all my friends and acquaintances, I wouldn't be without any of them as they make my life richer and much more interesting than if I were surrounded by spitting images of myself.

I hope you have enjoyed reading this. I thank all those who contributed.

*Jo Borthen, Exeter. Email jo4eo@aol.com*

*And my thanks to you, Jo, for two really interesting "specials" (and a third in the pipeline) - you deserve a medal! Since much discussion appears to hinge on the precise interpretation which each family puts on the words "structured" and "autonomous" (and I contend that a learning situation can be simultaneously autonomous and highly structured), perhaps writers would consider avoiding those words for the final part of this trilogy? Doesn't Roland's "Democratic" category (NL no. 143)? cover much of the range discussed here? - Anne Rix (NL Co-ord)*

*A late arrival, I blame the Christmas post! This is probably the most structured piece that I have received and I would like to reiterate: we all home educate in the way that suits ourselves and our families, there is no right or wrong, only what is right for your individual needs.*

## **A more directed approach to home education**

### **Why do we do it this way?**

For many reasons, some of which may seem just frivolous. Here is a selection:

#### **• It's the only way I know how to teach**

When I taught undergraduates, they would only see me for one hour in the week. The rest of the time – besides partying / doing work for other tutors – they would be studying their choice of books from the reading list, looking out others, writing their essays when, where and how they chose, provided they met the deadline. But at the end of the week it was I who set the next essay title.

So: for the start of each day there is an agenda set. Core subjects for us – maths, English and music are always there plus a selection from other subjects. There is a mixture of open-ended and closed tasks, ones which require input from me and ones which can be done entirely independently. What order they are done in, or how much time is taken over each one is not for me to say. We keep terms and I make termly plans – though these are flexible and adaptable to new circumstances (eg FMD when geography field work had been planned), new opportunities (like - someone's planned a group trip to the theatre and are we interested in going?) and changing tastes ("I really loved that: can we do more?"). We interpret subjects very broadly, we are not bound by National Curriculum and it is really just a springboard to further learning. Nevertheless, it is recognisably a curriculum.

#### **• We don't live on a desert island**

Life in any society does not always consist of doing one's own thing. I do not think I would be doing anyone any favours if I never required offspring to undertake tasks they would much rather not, or not at that time, or not in that way.

So: I do not deliberately set unwelcome/tedious tasks on the grounds that they will be 'character building', but I accept that in the normal course of events, some will be more welcome than others.

#### **• It's quicker (sometimes)**

There is only one way to conjugate a particular verb in a foreign language, there are laws of mathematics, etc.; and advanced work can be difficult if basics are not mastered.

So: I teach grammar, I do not attempt to deliver instruction in modern (or ancient!) languages in the target language, we have an old-fashioned maths textbook which does not jazz up the subject, we did algebra drills until simplifying equations was second nature, and I do not wait for offspring to pick it up by osmosis. There is a time to investigate and find things out by research; and there is a time to stop re-inventing the wheel.

Strangely enough, in the light of support for the non-curriculum way on the grounds that it promotes creativity (see the last newsletter), our MAIN REASON for a more structured approach is because our HE student shows **outstanding creative talent**.

1. You do not get to paint pictures good enough to have somebody from the Royal Academy look at them, or write excellent music, or become a creative mathematician, or be a midfield general of your football team, or whatever, unless you have a sure technique. That means practice. Lots of it.
2. Excellence means channelling inspiration into disciplined forms.  
*We find a structured environment helps.*

• **Children are not always right**

I just do not believe in the Rousseau-esque optimistic opinion of human nature as 'naturally' tending towards the good. Even if it did, there are plenty of other influences at work on a growing child. I have been on this planet longer, and did not allow offspring in toddlerhood to discover by personal research whether ovens are hot.

So: as offspring journey towards adulthood, I do not think it is my job just to support; when offspring come up with seriously bad life-plan ideas, parents can say the things their friends won't necessarily.

• **Is this authoritarian or authoritative?**

This is not a new question. There is that wonderful episode in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) where one of the most odious characters is interrogating a guest:

'Has your governess left you?' *[A full-time tutor, that is; nearly always living in.]*

'We never had a governess.'

'No governess! How was that possible? Five daughters brought up in a home without a governess! – I never heard of such a thing. Your mother must have been quite a slave to your education.'

Elizabeth could hardly help smiling, as she assured her that had not been the case.

'Then who taught you? Who attended to you? Without a governess you must have been neglected.'

'Compared with some families, I believe we were; but such of us as wished to learn were always encouraged to read, and had all the masters that were necessary. Those who chose to be idle, certainly might.'

'Aye, no doubt; but that is what a governess will prevent ... I always say that nothing is to be done in education without steady and regular instruction, and nobody but a governess can give it.'  
*(Vol II ch 6)*

That Jane Austen places such sentiments in the mouth of a Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who gets her come-uppance in the end, invites her readers to be very sceptical of the steady-regular-instruction-for-all-and-only-the-professionals-can-do-it brigade. Equally, that much unhappiness befalls Elizabeth's family because her parents allow the family a freedom which the younger daughters in particular seriously mishandle, also prompts thought.

**What does a directed approach mean to us?**

In a word: FREEDOM. Not freedom from, but freedom TO.

*Jennifer Brooker* [jembrooker@freenet.co.uk](mailto:jembrooker@freenet.co.uk)

*Thanks to all contributors. \*\*The next special report will be your chance to respond to the ideas expressed in the last two newsletters. Write to Jo Borthen, 57 Florida Drive, Exeter, EX4 5EX or preferably by email – [jo4eo@aol.com](mailto:jo4eo@aol.com) deadline March 1<sup>st</sup> 2002.\*\**

**This month, from the early EO feature on educational stories from the papers:**

## **EDUCATION THROUGH THE PRESS THROUGH THE YEARS**

### ***From Dec 1980:***

Professor Jean Piaget the Swiss psychologist and father of modern child psychology died aged 84 in Geneva. "Ironically Piaget never obtained a university degree in psychology. He held a zoology degree." (Times Educational Supplement 17 Sept)

### ***From June 81:***

The government recommended a 'core' curriculum in March which should improve educational standards. According to the Education Secretary Mark Carlisle, many school leavers can barely read, write or calculate. A representative of a teacher's union commented: "Mr Carlisle's recipe for a balanced school curriculum is a combination of the blindly obvious and the obviously blind." (Daily Telegraph 26 March)

### ***From April 82***

Councillor Fred Long, chairman of Durham County Education Committee, said: "Personally, I agree with the use of the cane but I don't like to hear it referred to as corporal punishment - that makes it sound brutal." (The Durham Advertiser 29 Jan)

### ***From April 84***

Careers expert Tony Watts argues that schools must change because the maintenance of the traditional curriculum, highly academic and geared to exams, is not a feasible option with youth unemployment at its present level. (Guardian 10 Jan)

In a study of the attitudes and beliefs of young people today 'boys and girls in roughly equal proportions see death and school as two of the worst aspects of life.' (TES 24 Feb)

### ***From April 86***

Sir Keith Joseph is irresponsible to insist on scrapping O levels and CSE in favour of the new GCSE exam when teachers have not been prepared for it. Thousands of young people could have their academic chances ruined said the National Association of Head Teachers. (Daily Telegraph 17 Feb)

### ***From April 87***

At the recent North of England conference Education Secretary Kenneth Baker called the entire education system eccentric, maverick and so muddled that it defied description. To remedy the situation, Baker proposes to introduce a national curriculum if his party is re-elected, after 'wide consultation' notably with the 'customer' (ie parents and employers) of the system. (Daily Telegraph 10 Jan)

### ***From December 87***

Dr Chris Kyruacou of York University told an educational conference in Birmingham that 'prolonged exposure to problems in the classroom, trying to motivate children, poor working conditions and low pay, has led to cases of "teacher burn-out", a state of exhaustion resulting in diminishing enthusiasm for the job.' (Daily Telegraph 12 Sept.)

## REVIEWS

### **The Lion Children**

by *Angus, Maissie and Travers McNeice*

In 1995 Kate and her five children left their Cotswold cottage to live in Botswana. After several homes, including one neighbouring a crocodile farm, Kate meets and falls in love with Pieter, a lion researcher. All the family becomes involved in the research project with the inherent danger, excitement and lots of caring for each other and the animals around them. Not only is the story true but it is wonderfully told by the three middle children who are all home educated by their enterprising mother. The writing is done in sections by the children and illustrated with their drawings of the animals and wonderful photography. Parts of the story refer to their home education – this is a mother to make us all feel inadequate but inspired. What I was most touched by was their education through living life to the full. The children tell their story with a maturity and knowledge beyond their years. I defy you or your children to be able to put this book down.

Betty Ball

£17.99 ISBN 0752 841 602 Orion Publishing

### **Dumbing Us Down – the Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling**

by *John Taylor Gatto*

The author has worked for more than 26 years as a NY schoolteacher. He refers to school as warehousing children where they are locked away from the business of the world the same as old people. Without children and old people mixing in daily life a community has no future and past, only a continuous present. How can children discover meaning and satisfying purpose, which are a big part of what education is, being locked away from the world in schools? He speaks of the success of home schooling where children are 5 or even 10 years ahead of their formally trained peers in their thinking ability. He encourages parents not to be panicked by scare tactics into surrendering their children to experts. He likens school to vampire networks separating parents and children from each other, tearing off huge chunks of time and energy needed for building families and communities. Formal schooling has seriously wounded our families and communities by bleeding away the time we need with our children for vital interaction. For this and for other reasons he says we need less school, not more. He suggests that family can be the main engine of education and that it is impossible for education and schooling to be the same thing. He teaches kids the lesson of bells – that is when the bell goes no work is worth finishing, so why care too deeply about it even though they want to make it appear that they do. Our world wouldn't survive a flood of confident people very long, so he teaches kids that self-respect should depend on expert opinion. They are constantly evaluated and judged. They work for official favour, grades or other trinkets of subordination; these have no connection with education – they are the paraphernalia

of servitude, not freedom. Whatever education is, it should make you a unique individual, not a conformist; it should furnish you with an original spirit with which to tackle the big challenges; it should allow you to find values which will be your road map through life; it should make you spiritually rich, a person who loves whatever they are doing; it should teach you what is important, how to live and how to die. School is a 12-year jail sentence where bad habits are the only curriculum truly learned. He teaches school and wins awards doing it. He should know.

Helen Donaldson

£6.17 from Amazon Books, New Society Publishers

### **Let Our Children Learn**

by *Michael Foot, Tony Brown and Peter Holt*

This book tells how six adults enabled 28 children to make their own books over two days. The three authors are all retired teachers (two of them primary heads) and I felt they were trying to convert former colleagues to a new way of thinking. *LOCL* has lovely illustrations from the children's completed books, quotations from sources as diverse as Chris Woodhead and John Holt (surely you can't get more diverse than that?) and examples of the children's writing. These all enfold basic observations of what happened and reflections on how children learn and how they should be treated and taught. The adults started out with a plan but the children influenced what actually happened. It wasn't too hard to sense the authors' dislike of league tables and "the dangerously misguided nature of much recent and current policy-making." An interesting book that gave me some ideas but I found it difficult to read at times. It seemed they were trying really hard to impress academics and teachers by writing some very long sentences to stress some really simple points; oops, it must be catching. For EO members the authors' views of learning are like preaching to the converted.

Sue Onions

ISBN 1 871 526 49 3 Education Now

### **Rabbit's Wish**

by *Paul Stewart and Chris Riddell*

This is a touching story of friendship between a rabbit and a hedgehog. Rabbit wishes that hedgehog could stay up all day instead of sleeping. His wish comes true and they have a great day together. Some important aspects of friendship are covered – sacrifice, concern for others, honesty. I liked the way that their characters are strong and clear, which I think makes the story come alive for Amber. The illustrations are superb: the artist manages to capture some very subtle expressions beautifully. Although I found the rabbit a bit too caricatured – he loses his 'rabbit-ness' a bit – the children, however, didn't seem to notice. This book would make a good present for a friend.

Caroline Farquar with Amber (4)

£9.99 ISBN 0 86264 719 3 Andersen Press

**The Barefoot Book of Heroes - Great Men from Many Times and Places**

by Rebecca Hazell

This book has twelve different stories from ten different countries. It is beautifully illustrated. Each story has four pages all complimented by wonderful pictures. At the end of each story there is a map of where he did the thing that he is a hero for. The map also has a key at the bottom along with numbers that you look up on the map and then see what happened there on the number key. I especially liked the story about Prince Taishi Shotoku who was a Japanese Emperor. He ruled thirteen hundred years ago. He borrowed a lot of ideas from China to make Japan a better place. To do this he sent a fleet of ships on a very dangerous journey across the Yellow Sea. It was dangerous because they did not have a compass and if they went too close to the land there were pirates, and they went through many big storms and a lot of ships were lost. Other stories in the book are about Martin Luther King from America, Gandhi from India, Socrates from Greece, Mansa Kankan Musa from Africa and Sequoya from North America. I liked this book very much and would like to read the one about heroines as well.

Molly Whitehall (8)

£7.99 ISBN 1 84148 201 3 Barefoot Books

**Ruggles by Anne Fine**

Accompany Ruggles on his adventures through his neighbourhood. Ruggles is curious, inquisitive, sometimes in the mood only for relaxing, but a dog who appreciates all seasons. With him, share the crispness of spring, the laziness of summer, the gusts of autumn winds and the magic of snowy winters. Ruth Brown's wonderful illustrations bring the words of the story to life. Definitely a story to be read and listened to and was very much enjoyed by Hamzah and myself. Aalyah Naqvi with Hamzah (3)

£9.99 ISBN 0 86264 895 5 Andersen Press

**The Boyfriend Trap! by Mary Hooper**

This was quite a good book: it flowed along really well, and had a surprise ending! Terri (a teenage girl, who is obsessed with magazines, and also a story called "Girls Upstairs") is going to stay at Sarah's (her sister) flat, in London. Whilst there, she decides, that Sarah needs a boyfriend! She draws up a list of possibilities: Simon, Brett, or Greg!? Every time she goes out, Terri looks for another possible boyfriend, often ending in funny, comical results and disasters! If you like Jacqueline Wilson as an author, then you should love this book! It is funny, descriptive, and very different! I couldn't put it down and I didn't want it to end! I read it in one day! I would recommend this tale to girls 10-14, who like a good laugh.

Megan Whiteman 11

£4.99 ISBN 0 7445 7264 9 Walker Books

**Night Riders by Mark Roberts**

This is the story of two teenage boys who have Down's Syndrome and have become friends since William moved next door to Stanley. They hear that a performing dolphin in Florida is going to be taken for scientific research, so hatch a plan to save him that involves 'armed' robbery on the local building society. Although written in the third person, it tries to portray the world through Stanley and William's eyes, which I found interesting and enjoyable. I would only criticise that the building up seems disproportionately long, taking three quarters of the book, so that the action part seems brief and a bit rushed. I think it could be enjoyed by age 9 and up.

Sally Jarvis

£4.99 ISBN 1 84270 0227 Andersen Press

**The Stone Age News by Fiona MacDonald**

When I first saw this I didn't think I'd enjoy it, the history of the Stone Age told in magazine format, but Gwennan was immediately interested saying "it's as if it happened right now" and she has remembered quite a lot of details. Included are articles about groups of people moving from Africa into unknown lands, the effects of the Ice Age on their lives and new farming techniques all illustrated by drawn 'photographs'. Useful tips included 'how to make the most of your mammoth', a 'boil in the bag stew' and how to 'jazz up your old clothes'. We picked up some ideas on the craft pages, how to make a flint arrow, a tepee and a coil pot to be fired in the ashes of a fire. There was an 'agony aunt' page and adverts for Stone Age accessories and workshops. A fun way to imagine how life would have been and with lots more titles available we shall be searching out some others.

Susan Bain with Gwennan (7)

£4.99 ISBN 0 7445 7716 0 Walker Books

**Judy Moody Gets Famous**

by Megan McDonald

This is about a girl called Judy and she wants to become famous because there is a girl in her class called Jessica who was in the middle of the front of the newspaper. So she tries to be famous in spelling but she couldn't do that. So she went to a pet contest with her cat, but they were only 2nd, which she thought wasn't good enough. So then she accidentally steps on her friend's finger and breaks it. She goes to hospital with her friend and finds dolls there. Judy takes the dolls home and makes them look really good and she gets herself in the paper as the phantom doll doctor. I thought it was a cool story. It is part of a series and it has made me want to read another Judy Moody book. I would recommend it to most ages, but especially girls.

Tabitha Cromie (8)

£3.99 ISBN 0 7445 8907 X Walker Books

### **The World of Anne Frank**

*compiled by the Anne Frank House*

Anne Frank was a German girl who had to hide from the Nazis in the Second World War because of her religion which was Jewish. She wrote a diary which is very famous, about the time when she had to hide with her family and another in an annex behind a bookcase in another family's house. She was thirteen. This book is a little bit about her, but is mostly about life in Amsterdam and Germany in the Second World War. Each page in the book has a selection of black and white photographs to do with the period, Jews or Anne Frank. In all there are 244 photographs. There isn't any dense text, just captions for the photographs and interesting pieces of writing. I think it is a very informative book and it looks good. It tells the story of Anne Frank's family with photos of her from a baby. Her father liked taking photographs. There are other photos which are about the history of the time: the Nazi rallies, things painted on Jewish shops and houses, burning books which were thought bad by the Nazis. After the photographs about the war and Anne Frank and her family, there are pictures about the end of the war and of prejudice today - people still not liking Jewish people and things in other countries such as a boy called Stephen Lawrence who was killed in England. This book was produced by the Anne Frank museum in Amsterdam who also has an exhibition that I have seen.

Emma Whitehall (11)

£12.99 ISBN 0 333 78318 2 MacMillan Books

### **Paper Automata by Rob Ives**

I liked this book because it was interesting to put together, but some bits were very fiddly and my mum had to help me. I like the mechanisms they use to make the models work, such as the camshaft for the Hopping Sheep and a lever for the Pecking Hen. They look really good when they work. The card is a bit thin and you need strong glue and sometimes sticky tape and paper clips to hold bits together until they are dry. You need to cut the models out carefully and score the lines properly. The instructions are quite easy and the models are great fun to make.

Freyja Steenman-Clark (9)

£4.95 ISBN 1 899618 21X Tarquin Publications

### **Automata Too! by Rob Ives**

This book is great fun and I found it quite easy to do myself except for one model my dad had to help me with because I did not read the instructions properly. I made all four models. One is a train and two cogs make the train go round the track. One is busy bees that move across flowers. The next model is the hare and the tortoise where you turn a handle and the tortoise and hare move in a race. The last is the owl and the pussycat in a boat that they row. It is really clever how the models work when you have made them. I really enjoyed this book.

Keith Hall (7)

£4.95 ISBN 1 899618 45 7 Tarquin Publications

### **The Happy Rag by Tony Ross**

Two stories that meet in the middle, a very original format. This book deals with comfort blankets - how grown ups try to discourage them but some children like them because they give them extra confidence. Comfort blankets are something I have never dealt with so I have no idea whether this would be helpful for a child who is attached to one, although it could potentially encourage their use. The stories are comical and the illustrations vivid and certainly enjoyed by Amber. She says "It is scary in the middle but the magic carpet is surprising. The mum wants to wash the happy rag and she should because otherwise it will get very dirty, outside it's nice that it's a pretend bear." I found the middle page where the stories fuse a little confusing at first but we did enjoy the clever twist. Thumbs up from Amber - ok from me.

Caroline Farquar with Amber (4)

£4.99 ISBN 1 84270 0537 Andersen Press

### **Seriously Silly Series by Laurence Anholt**

Every now and again you come across a book that is so much fun that you start looking for the rest of the series: thus are these titles, turning fairy tales fairly and squarely on their heads with such offerings as 'Jack and the Giant Beanstalk', 'Shampooole', 'Rumple Crumple Stinky Pin', 'Snow White and the Seven Aliens' and 'Eco Wolf and the Three Pigs'. All of the books have nice line drawings that are in themselves funny too. Without giving too much away the story lines revolve around clever word plays and role reversals, for example in *Shampooole* a cure for baldness is invented by a hairdresser, the beautiful princess gets trapped in a tower by a witch and ultimately gets rescued by the good Prince Tim O'Tay. These are nice short stories, all with happy endings, good fun (we've read some several times now) and make great bed-time reading.

Steev Stamford

£7.99 each Orchard Books Seriously Silly Series

### **Ten Seeds by Ruth Brown**

We all love this book. Starting with the planting of the 10 sunflower seeds it follows the fate of each seed until there is just one fine healthy plant - which drops her seeds! With the aid of realistic, detailed and charming illustrations, this book absolutely enthralled Amber and Leo (and me!). Without any further explanation, the bold and clear images are enough to show Leo the wonderful miracle that happens when seeds are planted and the events that can interrupt their growth. However, it has sparked off much discussion with Amber and in her own words "helped me learn a lot." This is a simple and brilliant book that I highly recommend for 1 - 5 year olds.

Caroline Farquar with Amber (4) and Leo (2)

£5.99 ISBN 0 86264 849 1 Andersen Press

### Dr Optic's Amazing Pop-Up Illusions

I thought when I opened this book that it would be just facts but it is actually full of interesting things to do like a 3D theatre with special glasses and 8 scenes to look at. There is a really interesting zoetrope which you put together, then you insert a strip of pictures and then when you spin the zoetrope the pictures all look as if they are moving. There is a little booklet of big illusions. There is a pop up eye, this explains how the eye works. There are lots of different illusions on each page which are really clever and mum and dad enjoyed doing them all too. It is a really good book.

Keith Hall (7)

£14.99 ISBN 0 333 78126 0 Macmillan Books

### Megamouse by Emma Laybourn

We thought this was an excellent novel. Joe and Kelly play computer games on Joe's grandfather's computer and discover Megamouse, a computer mouse that communicates via the computer screen.

Megamouse plays games with Joe and Kelly. With the humans out of the room, Megamouse also gets to know Cleo the pet rat. Several storylines weave together very effectively. The pace quickens about half way through when Megamouse escapes to the outside world. There are some humorous parts and a lot of suspense towards the end. I think this book would suit 7 to 9 year olds who know a little about computers.

Clare Crane with Natasha (7) and Anthea (5)

£4.99 ISBN 1 84270 013 8 Andersen Press

### Little Monsters CD-ROMs for PC/Mac

*Sulky Sue in Stupid Mr Mugglepuggle (Numeracy 6-7)*

*TV Trevor in The Galactic Kid (Literacy 6-7)*

I did not like these CD-ROMs and Natasha and Anthea did not warm to the characters Sulky Sue and TV Trevor. Sue is constantly rude. When you take too long to do something Sue says, "This isn't fair, you said you'd help me!". Sue also says "I like you, you're good at sums." Personally, I like to think that my children's character will not be judged on whether or not they are good at sums, so I find this sort of comment distasteful! The expectations of ability did not seem consistent. On one activity they give three numbers and want to know the smallest, the middle and the largest number, whilst on another activity they expect the player to recognise 2 digit multiples of 2, 5 and 10. There are also plenty of errors. On some activities you are able to click somewhere on the screen and the question will be repeated, whilst on another activity we could not get the question repeated and Sulky Sue was getting angry that we were not answering the question. We did not find TV Trevor any better.

Clare Crane with Natasha (7) and Anthea (5)

### Revolting Ronnie in My Maggot Scamper

Oh dear! Revolting Ronnie was just too revolting for us. The girls were thoroughly unimpressed by the idea of counting boils, bogeys and toenail clippings. The

very worst parts of this CD-ROM for them were the ordering of numbered dead flies by impaling them on spikes, and the estimating and measuring using a dead rat, neither of which they could bear to do. Lucy summed it up by saying, "I think this is mostly probably for boys." However, if you are into this sort of thing, this CD does cover all the basic maths skills (aimed at National Curriculum 5-6 year olds). The idea is to find Ronnie's lost maggot, Scamper, which you do by completing the activities in each of the six places that he might be. When each activity is completed, you are awarded a sticker which appears in the sticker book (to complete this book you need only to acquire the other 15 CD-ROMs in this series!). If you are really keen, there is a teacher/parent section, which keeps track of the length of time it takes each child to complete each activity (assuming they didn't stop for a drink or the loo in the middle!). So whilst the maths activities in this CD-ROM were fine, from our point of view they would have been better carried out using flowers, seeds and seashells, rather than the unlikely collection of objects used here. I doubt if we will use this CD-ROM again.

Vivienne Hughes with Lucy (5), Claudia (8) and Stephanie (9).

Little Monster CDs £9.99 each published by Ransom

### 'Being Born' and 'The Lion'

Jem says "I like these books because you turn a half transparent page which changes the landscape.

I thought the writing was too small at first but then I thought it was the right size. I preferred *The Lion*.

I think I would probably give them to 6 year old people." Celeste enjoyed having these books read to her. She liked learning which big cat was which, and especially about birth and new babies. I liked the format and the strong spiral spines which meant Ivo could read them too. Some of the overlays made it seem a bit confusing. Ideal for fact-loving age 4-6?

Kirsten Friesleben with Jem (7), Celeste (3) and Ivo (nearly 2)  
£6.99 each ISBN 1 85103 315 7 & 1 85103 316 5 Moonlight Publishing

### Frog and a Special Day by Max Velthuis

We have read about 5 of the 'Frog' books so far and have enjoyed them all. The illustrations are lovely and each tale has a moral woven into it, usually with Frog, a rather anxious and sensitive frog, imagining something bad is going to happen but his friends rally round and reassure him that everything is ok and that they love him - very comforting stories. In this book Frog is told it is going to be a special day but he can't see anything different to usual and Duck, Pig and Rat don't seem to either. Frog gets angry, feeling he's tricked but eventually finds out it's his birthday and his friends have arranged a surprise party for him. Not the best one we've read from the series, our favourite so far has been *Frog is Frog* and *Frog and the Stranger* but we still enjoyed it.

Susan Bain with Gwenan (7) and Ceri (4)

£4.99 ISBN 1 84270 050 2 Andersen Press

### Amazing Grace

by *Mary Hoffman and Caroline Binch*

An attractive and nicely written picture book aimed at 7 year olds. Grace enjoys stories and loves to act them out. On her own she plays all the lead characters of exciting stories such as Hannibal crossing the Alps, Hiawatha and Jungle Book. At school the other children (of various different colour and race) tell her that as a black girl she cannot play Peter Pan. Grace is encouraged by her mother and grandmother to be what she wants. She gets to be Peter Pan in the play and the other children support and compliment her.

Beautifully illustrated.

Clare Crane with Natasha (7) and Anthea (5)

£4.99 ISBN 0 7112 0699 6 Frances Lincoln

### The Malifex by Steve Alton

This book is about Sam who goes on holiday to Dorset every year with his parents. Every year is the same, trekking around Dorset, rain or shine. But this year is slightly different..... Sam makes a new friend. He awakens a wizard to begin a timeless battle against the evil Malifex! This book is very exciting and aimed at 9 - 14 year old. Mum says, don't be put off by the cover!

Louise Cutler (12)

£4.99 ISBN 0 86315 353 4 Floris Books

### Bat and Bell by Terry Deary and Barbara Allen

This book is very funny, with lots of small cartoon strips. My favourite bit was a picture of the baddie, Councillor Tripewell, with steam coming out of his ears, driving a bulldozer! I liked the way they found out who was ruining all their plans by recording a ghostbell sound and taking it up the church tower. The trouble was the bell scared their own friends as well.

Kit Freiesleben (8)

£3.99 ISBN 0 571 19371 4 Faber & Faber

Sparks Science Series No 4

### Reader Rabbit Maths CD Ages 4 - 6

This is an excellent piece of software, which is attractive and enjoyable to use. The theme is Reader Rabbit at the circus. It is more simply laid out than the other ones in this series. Players choose an activity and the level and a point is awarded on completion of the activity. The points can be exchanged for prizes, which are kept safe even when a player leaves the game. This CD-ROM is easy to use and needed no explanations from me. There is no teaching in the games but it is very good for practising a skill which is already understood. I would extend the 4-6 year old guideline to include 7 year olds.

Clare Crane with Natasha (7) and Anthea (5)

£9.99 The Learning Company

### Note

Prices quoted are the publishers' recommended retail prices. Shop around for lower prices - try discount book shops, mail order discount book clubs and the Internet. Contact details from publishers are set out below but many titles can be ordered from your local bookshop.

### CONTACTS

Amazon Books [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

Andersen Press 020 7840 8701  
[www.andersenpress.co.uk](http://www.andersenpress.co.uk)

Barefoot Books 0870 241 5031  
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Floris Books (see Scottish Book Source)

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The Learning Company 01293 651 710  
[www.mattellinteractive.co.uk](http://www.mattellinteractive.co.uk)

Walker Books 01256 302692

Send in your reviews to Sally Hall,  
Nant-y-garreg, Saron, Llandysul SA44 5EJ  
or email [sally@aecb.net](mailto:sally@aecb.net)

Correction: there was an error in last month's CONTACT list. The website for One-to-One should read: [www.nezertbooks.com](http://www.nezertbooks.com)

## SCOTLAND

### Hogmanay ruined by Scottish Executive!

**And it will get worse if we don't ALL stay alert and make our choices daily as to actions.**

*I am writing this on Jan 11, 2002. Things are changing daily here. The Scottish National Party has submitted a parliamentary motion which calls for the Scottish Parliament to condemn the draft guidance just issued, to withdraw the draft, and to bring Scots law into line with that of England and Wales on home education (basically an amendment to remove Section 35, which currently requires consent before withdrawal from school - home educators want this requirement removed).*

#### **Meanwhile news to date!**

For those who have not already heard, the long awaited draft guidance to education authorities in Scotland is out. It was issued over Christmas, and Santa is getting a lot of angry 'no thanks' letters! The draft has caused a furore amongst home educators throughout the UK as well as in Scotland. The press have made much of it, both for and against so far, but ever ready to pounce on anything juicy such as the slightest hint of madness in any of us (as if!) - but meanwhile oblivious to the inbred madness of the system. The fuss has also reached the Ministers and MSPs and the Scottish Executive. There is a group of busy HE activists writing to absolutely everybody - we in EO have kept in touch with them as we have proceeded.

#### **THE DRAFT**

We (EO and other Home Education groups) met with the Scottish Executive in July 2000. They did listen to us and there is evidence of this in the draft, where they embrace some of the underlying philosophy of home education and refer to the many and varied approaches to it. (It would be wise not to undervalue this achievement despite the other major flaws). It was clear at that stage that the purpose of the guidance was 'to assist and encourage local authorities to "not impede" the rights of families to home educate in the course of carrying out their duties with regard to those families.' This came from the debate in parliament leading to the amendment passed, which in turn called for the guidance. At the time of issue of the draft the Scottish Executive authors may genuinely have believed they had achieved that purpose - they will now be in no doubt that they have missed the point. Some believe there is a plot, but it is more likely to be just the systemic prejudice against HE that runs throughout the system, which is bad enough.

#### **The alarm from home educators concerns the following main areas:**

**Firstly:** the draft has embodied in its core the confusion between educational provision and welfare. Education departments already confuse these issues. The law itself does not confuse them. The draft, by including vague provisos throughout, consolidates in its fabric a charter for prejudiced, selective and unequal treatment of families by education officers who are likely to be untrained in the law relating to home education or in its scope and validity. They may also be actively prejudiced against it. If the authors are not aware of such prejudice we can cite as evidence the recent TES rant by a councillor in Aberdeenshire who has responsibilities for home education. He may have made our case; the article was so bad! There is no mention anywhere in the draft of such training, or of an anti-prejudice policy. Either the Scottish executive naively believe there are no prejudiced education officers and that they are all rational and fair, or they believe that we are sufficiently cowed to allow such provisos to be left in.

**Secondly:** the draft specifically exhorts education authorities to identify children not at school in their area by using other data including birth, health visitor records and census information. We believe this to be contravening data protection and human rights legislation.

**Thirdly:** the draft, having said clearly that there is no statutory duty to monitor home education, goes on in some detail to say how education authorities should monitor it.

**Fourthly:** even after all the debate in 2000 around trying to remove the requirement for consent to withdraw a child in order to home educate (Sect. 35, 1980 Act), the draft states that 8 weeks is a reasonable time for an authority to consider consent and while it suggests sensitivity during that time it states that the child should still attend school and that truancy procedures still apply.

***They did miss the point didn't they?*** And the point they have missed is that the best way to assist education authorities to "not impede" families does not include incorporating clauses allowing them to do so.

So far EO has written to the Scottish Minister for education and young people, Cathy Jamieson; to the first minister, Jack McConnell; and to the Scottish Executive authors. I have also written to my MSP, Malcolm Chisholm (Minister for Health). We gave them early notice of the unacceptable nature of the draft as indicated above and we asked them to take redeeming steps quickly.

Our approach has been clear, articulate and firm while giving them room to come back. EO has a record of being a successful advocate of home education with authorities. Our policy is to work with them where possible rather than to go for confrontation. We try to get them on our side, give them accurate information, to point out where we think they are wrong and consistently to put forward our own proposals until they adopt the right policies. At these sorts of times this approach may not be popular with the activists among us, but note also that we do not avoid confrontation if faced with it - as evidenced by EO's support of families who have struggles with their authorities.

As said at the start of this update: things have moved on, the parliamentary motion has been submitted and support is being gathered. EO's letters are in accord with the condemnation in the motion and will be read as support for it - although at the time of writing we did not intend to call for it to be withdrawn, at least until after they had had the chance to come back to home educators. That is history for now and we need to present a united front in the rejection of the draft guidance as it stands.

If the parliamentary motion is passed and we get the amendment (to remove Section 35, the requirement for EA consent) there is a much better chance of decent guidance being given to education authorities and a safer future for home educators' rights in Scotland. This of course will delight everyone. If however it doesn't get passed, we may have a harder job getting the changes to the draft which we would want. The risk has been taken already. The motion has been submitted. It is most probably now in our interests as home educators to support this motion, and we will discuss whether EO should officially support it at the council meeting at the end of January. Individual support of the motion is a matter for each one of us to decide.

## You can Write

If you wish to show your support for this motion write to your MSP if you live in Scotland or to Cathy Jamieson (Minister for education and young people) or the Shadow Ministers.

**EO and all home educators in Scotland want Section 35 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to be changed, and want the guidance substantially rewritten.** This is relevant and important to all home educators in the UK because when the final guidance is out it will set precedents. **Access a copy, read it for yourself and decide** whether you will actively give support by writing.

## You can March

A march is being organised independently by Jackie Turner for 7 February in Edinburgh. Contact Jackie at <jackie.turner2@btopenworld.com>

## To access the guidance:

- (preferred method - you need acrobat reader) via the website:  
<[www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/homed.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/homed.pdf)>
- For a paper copy you can phone them on 0131 244 4485, but they will then have your address!
- Send an A4 sae with 41p stamps to me and I will forward you a copy.

**To Write to the Scottish Minister and Shadow Deputy Ministers of Education and Young People:** name /title, Scottish Executive, St. Andrew's House, Regent Rd., Edinburgh EH1 3DG

*If you want an update once you receive this newsletter go to the EO website where you will find an update page. Members not on email can send a Stamped addressed envelope and I will send you the update sheet*

**Your views are welcome** by EO at any time either by emailing or by writing to me no matter how small the point you wish to make. You are also welcome to comment on the process or to make suggestions especially if you live in Scotland.

*email me [ann.samuel@btinternet.com](mailto:ann.samuel@btinternet.com)*

**And in conclusion:** EO has made a respectable and not insignificant contribution so far but has not initiated this parliamentary motion. EO would have chosen to work with the Scottish Executive to seek the necessary changes to the draft before moving on to calling for complete rejection should the changes not have been forthcoming. If the motion fails this will still be our route, though calling for scrapping then will not be very practical since the parliament will have already, in effect, endorsed the Guidance. If the motion passes then new Guidance will have to be issued in due course and EO will make contributions to the content of that Guidance.

If you would like to contribute to a detailed response to the Guidance from EO please contact me, if you want more direct action then do get involved with things being organised by other groups. Remember that ultimately action for Scotland will need to be organised and driven by members living here.

*ANN SAMUEL TILL*

### *Another EO family's story*

We are a family of six - four children and two parents. My two youngest children are now home educated and my eldest child, Sarah, is at sixth form college. She went through eleven miserable years at school and has very recently been diagnosed at college as being slightly dyslexic and quite dyscalculic. My thirteen-year-old daughter, Rebekah, attends school full time. She enjoys school and does not wish to be educated at home (my other three children think she is quite peculiar!). My youngest child, Antonia, contracted leukaemia at the age of three and a half years. She underwent two years of intensive chemotherapy and has been in remission for the last six years with no sign of the disease returning, thank God. She commenced school at the usual age of five years and joined her brother and two sisters at a local primary school.

During one of our regular visits to the Children's hospital, our wonderful Consultant asked how Antonia was getting on at school. I replied that her teacher considered her to be quite a nuisance as she was always organising everyone else (as she still does all the time), had her nose into everything that did not actually concern her (as she still does), voiced opinions when not asked to (still does), and was generally a very inquisitive and vociferous member of the class. I told him that I felt that teachers generally do not welcome children like Antonia. The Consultant looked at me and said, "Have you ever thought that these strong characteristics are probably the things that have helped her to get through?" I felt quite humbled but encouraged by these words and, on the next visit to the teacher, told her what our Consultant had said. I also told her that being a bit behind in reading and writing at the age of seven was not really important in the great scheme of things and that if Antonia's "attitude" was part of the reason that she was still alive and here with us, then I most certainly had no problem with it!

We continued to battle our way through school (I had no idea at this time that home education was an option or that EO existed) and at a subsequent open evening I was prepared for more critical comments, only to be met with a lovely smile and for the teacher to say how my words had made her think and that she had to agree that there is more to life for a child than to have to conform, conform, conform. I was amazed and delighted. Incidentally, this same teacher was really the only one who gave any constructive help to my son (later found to be dyslexic but undiagnosed by the school) but that is quite another story.

Time went on and Antonia did not cope too well at school as the bullying attitudes of some teachers, constant verbal abuse and threats of physical violence from a few pupils eventually began to wear her down and she became increasingly reluctant to go to school. This coincided with the start of home education for my son so it seemed a natural progression for Antonia to join William at home. They have been at home for eight months now and my only regret is that any of my four children ever set foot inside a school.

I would like to add, in this 25th anniversary year of EO, that my family is in the most fortunate position of having Iris and Geoff Harrison as our friends. We live quite close to them and I really do not know what I would do without their quiet calm, their wisdom, their insight, their support and friendship. They really are wonderful, warm people and without their commitment and courage in fighting the legal system all those years ago a lot of us would now be floundering in the dark and facing the threat of legal action by the LEA. Thank you Iris and Geoff, WE LOVE YOU.

"Provision for dyslexic children in mainstream schools too often means to just provide a chair in the room within a system of supervised neglect" - a quotation

*Jan and Tony Price, Badger's Beck, Frith Common, nr Tenbury Wells, Worcs. WR15 8JX*

### ***Responses to Callie Wirll from the previous newsletter:***

**Many thanks to Callie Wirll for being so honest in the December newsletter.**

I have three children (4, 3, 1) and would very much like to home-ed. However, my husband is totally against the idea despite my best efforts to persuade him otherwise. After much heart-searching and some arguments, I reluctantly agreed to send our eldest to school in September 2001. As he is only just four, he attends mornings only but will be full-time in January. I miss his company and thoroughly enjoy the afternoons when he is at home again. I often delay trips to the supermarket until the afternoon as he feels he has missed out if we go in the morning. However, despite my misgivings, he is doing well at school and, although reluctant to get ready some mornings, he races up the school path and looks forward to seeing his friends and learning new things. I am not looking forward to January as I feel that his education is slowly slipping out of my grasp and I can no longer fool myself that I can home-ed him part-time. The best I can do is ensure that the time he has at home is happy, fun and makes him feel secure, whilst keeping a very close eye on his schooling.

Like Callie, there are times when I think it will be great to have some free time once the youngest is at school and I will be able to pursue my own interests as and when I want, or work part-time. But I think this feeling may come from having three so close together. Once they are older, I assume it will be easier to follow my own interests as they will not need quite so much of my time.

I have wondered just how I would manage to home-educate anyway. I had a fairly average education myself and do not feel supremely confident of my ability to teach three children at once, all at different levels. There is always that nagging thought that I could try, fail hopelessly and then ruin my children's future prospects just because I fancied giving it a go!

I like receiving the EO newsletter as other people's styles of living are always interesting and it is a good reminder that we do not have to conform to the standard idea of education; however, I am often left feeling that I am not doing the right thing by sending my son to school and that I could and should do better.

*Sue Taylor, Wingere, 96 Church Road, Willesborough, Ashford, Kent TN24 0JG*

**I write in answer to Callie Wirll's letter in the December issue Agony column:**

#### **1. Elitism**

The home-eds you describe are only a section, a part of a huge diverse whole. I belong to the vast army of parents and carers who took their children out of school because it was the only possible solution at the time. Whether the problem was bullying, or, as in my case, unrecognised or inappropriate teaching of special needs. All three of my sons have varying degrees of dyslexia; one is also mild Autistic Spectrum. There is no elitism here. We often feel (though rarely admit it) that we, or God forbid, our children have failed in some way to be "normal", to "fit in", though in reality our children are just as valid as anyone else and quite often nicer human beings: it is society and the system that has failed them. But whatever, there is no elitism. We struggle to heal, to survive, to create something positive, and usually alone.

## 2. School-going friends

My children have little contact with other home-educated children. All their friends either go, or did go, to mainstream school (one friend is 19). We moved area 18 months after they came out of school and therefore friendships have been formed whilst they were out and about in the community. My sons were 12, 10 and 7 when we moved here. This is also exhausting as I have to put almost as much effort into their social lives as I do in their education, making our home a warm, happy, free, positive environment, which becomes a cross between a teen and pre-teen retreat and outdoor pursuits centre. I seem to spend most of my weekends in the kitchen cooking. We are very lucky in the place where we live.

## 3. Mixed race-mixed class

I do not believe that force is ever helpful in any situation (perhaps sometimes in a broken situation it is all that there is left, I don't know). Forcing our children to mix is pointless. Children learn by example: if they have mixed race/class/sexual orientation/gender friends, children will learn to see in other people only their common humanity, the cultural difference being merely an interesting extra. Schools do not teach children to mix: race, class difference, ability level and sexual orientation are more often used as fuel to encourage bullying and rivalry.

## 4. Local EO groups

There isn't one here. I have no access to other home educators in person. My friends come from a varied group. I never did understand this no TV business: to my mind it's akin to saying no books! OK, there is a lot of rubbish on television (but then there is a lot of printed rubbish too!) But the television gives access to wonderful visual and auditory treats, currently "Blue Planet", "Wild Africa" - BBC's 'Learning Zone'. I see the television and video as a hugely valuable resource which I would not wish to be without.

## 5. Support

I too look for support and encouragement and find little. What I am doing threatens people. Few children are 100% happy in school; before I came along that was just how it was, there was nothing to be done. But now I am a constant reminder that they do actually have a choice. Choices are difficult, dangerous things. I personally admire your courage (actually that's one of the things that people say to me that drives me crazy: I'm not brave, just desperate!). I had no choice and even now, six years later, despite my firm belief in the enormous benefits of home education, if I had a choice, I wouldn't dare. We home-eds have left the track, jumped the rails; we're free, but whatever happens there is no one else to blame, or even with whom to share the responsibility. However it works out, positive or negative, it will always be our fault.

## 6. How do we cope?

I only know about myself: sometimes I don't and I make myself physically ill with exhaustion. My friends say, "you're so dedicated, devoted" and "but what about you?" Sometimes I fight mental collapse and I hang on by my fingertips, a great black void open beneath me. So far I haven't fallen down into it, I think perhaps because I mustn't. I know that my happy, mostly confident, mature, thinking, learning sons wouldn't cope in school and I'm the only thing between them and IT.

## 7. Wealth

We are not wealthy; in fact financially we are poor. By the standards of this country we are very poor (though I do recognise that there is more to western poverty than lack of income). We live on an income of £26 per week less than the government deems to be the minimum that you can survive on (i.e. income support). I choose to do this, personally I cannot accept government handouts (touch of the inverted snob!); I don't have a problem with other people doing so, after all I do have an income, however small: some don't. I think this is all part of my refusal to accept society's ruling that my children don't fit into the system, there is something wrong with them, therefore I need charity. We still buy books, but not clothes or entertainment; the stair carpet, the plates, the sunlounger (that was a good find!) came out of a skip. However, as I said, we are lucky. The sea, full of fish, is literally on our doorstep. We cut peat to burn on the fire (a renewable source if dug by hand by individuals for their own use). The boys have their entertainment: they swim, climb, kayak and play in their immediate environment. It may sound like heaven, sometimes it is, but everything has a price. We live almost a mile from the road; food, milk, post have to be carried in on our backs whether it's dark, cold, pouring down with rain and a gale blowing, or not. And when the weather is bad (and it often is) we suffer terribly from cabin fever. We are also physically isolated, no one ever just drops in.

## 8. Intensity

Yes, I agree, this home-ed is very, very intense. I don't know how people ever manage to do anything else as well. Perhaps they have fewer children with fewer difficulties, can afford to buy their fish pre-gutted and ready-packed, their bread ready-baked and even possibly just press a button to switch on the gas central heating rather than cutting, lifting, drying and carrying home the peats and then, of course, clearing the grate and laying the fire! Actually, to be fair, my partner does most of that.

## 9. Women/feminism etc.

Which in some ways brings me to my last point: me. Yes I do this for my sons' education, for their happiness so that they will grow 'big and strong'. Yes, it's all-consuming; mentally and physically exhausting; but just look how I've grown and learnt and developed. Shy, quiet, non-mathematical me! I've learnt so much Maths that I'm guiding my son through 'A' level Maths and Physics. The world of relativity, quantum mechanics and complex algebra is opening up to me like a reluctant flower! I've learnt to kayak - on the sea! But not only that: I built, and taught my sons to build, the kayaks we use - beautiful, long, pointy, leaf-shaped boats from plywood resin and glassfibre. I've learnt to speak out for myself, and for my children. I'm learning Latin and what I don't know about dyslexia and the able end of Autistic Spectrum, well it's not worth knowing! And if it is, I'll find out about it eventually. I used to be afraid of adolescents, especially adolescent boys, but now my house flows with them like a never-ending stream (sometimes trickle, occasional flood) of them. And they sit in my kitchen on seats taken from a derelict minibus in front of the peat fire and share their lives, their hopes and troubles, their laughter. Wow, this home education has certainly been good for my education and development!

*(name and address supplied)*

## Local Records Archives

*Calling all Home Educators: Have you explored the wealth of resources in the archives of Local Records Offices? Have you seen what we can offer you?*

Your local record office is a treasure-trove of information ideal to help with or inspire any number of projects – both historical and non-historical. There, you and your child can trace the history of your house, town or village – looking at Victorian census information, old maps and deeds, even copies of the Domesday Book! Or learn how the coming of the railways caused a town to grow, or learn about old trades such as spinning or spade-tree making that industrialisation has caused to decline or disappear.

Children can research their family history looking at parish registers, birth certificates, photos, school log books etc and build up a picture of life in the time of their grandparents, great-grandparents or even great-great-grandparents.

They can look at old styles of handwriting - perhaps even practice writing using a quill pen. Or listen to reminiscence tapes and read old diaries and letters to find out about daily life in the past. Or study theatre programmes or old newspapers, or look at photos to see how fashions have changed, or wills and inventories to see what possessions people had and what belongings they left to their friends and family.

Children can investigate topics such as crime and punishment, the world wars of the 20th century, Victorian health, or education, the Civil War or look at any major national event from a local slant. Some record offices have educational packs for sale with copies of original documents from the archives and Suggested questions for research – here at Herefordshire Record Office there are packs available on the Coming of the Railways and Victorian health and hygiene, also a copy of a national resource based on the census with educational activities in the areas of maths, literacy, citizenship and art as well as history.

Many record offices are also willing to arrange behind-the-scene tours, or give talks and lead workshops with groups – at Herefordshire we offer a group session looking at aspects of Tudor life. Contact your local record office for more details of what they have to offer home educators – and give your children the opportunity to get their hands on the past....

A list of West Midlands archive services, together with their contact details can be found at: [www.westmidlandsarchives.org.uk/services.html](http://www.westmidlandsarchives.org.uk/services.html), or phone Herefordshire Record Office who will be able to supply you with the contact details of your local record office. Or see the Society of Archivists, Archives in Education group website for further ideas/details: [www.archives.org.uk/education](http://www.archives.org.uk/education)

I think the best way to find out details of local Record Offices across the country is to go to the website [www.hmc.gov.uk/archon/archon.htm](http://www.hmc.gov.uk/archon/archon.htm) and use the search facility there to look under the name of the appropriate town or county. If there are home educators who are not on the web, they are very welcome to ring our office (below) for the address of their local office; alternatively, local libraries will often know where the nearest record office is.

*Elizabeth Semper O'Keefe*

Herefordshire Record Office: 01432 260750  
[www.recordoffice.herefordshire.gov.uk](http://www.recordoffice.herefordshire.gov.uk)

This article first appeared in *HELM: The Newsletter for Home Educators in the West Midlands and Surrounding Areas* and appears here with the permission of the Author.

## LETTERS PAGES

### *Letter from America*

We are a home-schooling family who lives near Chicago. Our schooling program has tended to follow my daughter's interests. At 12 her interests have grown into a passion for history and art, especially the Baroque period and most especially English history beginning with James VI and I and ending with William III. The problem is that she's having a very difficult time finding anyone who shares these interests. We asked our homeschooling group and they suggested we might contact you and ask about finding a chat room within your group where she could post her messages or, perhaps, whether you could direct us elsewhere. We've tried the Sealed Knot, but that's more oriented towards adults, it seems.

Our second question is more nebulous. Like half the world, probably, we'd like to design a year-long study course in England. Since I am a magazine editor, I could take my work with me for those 12 months. We were wondering whether yours or other home-schooling groups offer any kind of home stay programs and how affordable they might be. We'd be glad to move around regularly.

We have visited England several times but the trips usually involved a lot of time spent working for me and just getting a taste of what is available for my daughter. I was so grateful that so many people took the time to talk to us. So many times when we are in museums here, the lecturers and docents gloss over her questions because she is young. Every place we went, from the Banqueting House to the National Gallery, offered her a different experience. The adults were unfailingly interested in her questions, and were so generous about sharing their knowledge and areas of expertise. She felt she'd found kindred spirits outside her home for the first time. There's not an area we've researched that doesn't offer something we'd like to see. We just want to experience whatever we can. We would be happy to host families here as well. *Mary Lerner, 4818 Countryside Ln., Harvard, IL60033 USA Email: hotelmag@voyager.net*

### *From Mary's daughter:*

Greetings from the United States. I am home-schooled and live about 90 miles from Chicago. I am very interested in history, especially English history. I've been lucky enough to visit England twice but my stays were short and I didn't have half the chance to see all the things I would have liked. But I keep on reading and making a list of all the things I'd like to do next time. For now, I was wondering if any of your members would like to start an email discussion group about history, or art or literature, or maybe if someone would be interested in just becoming an email pal.

*Oriana Lerner (same address as Mary, left)*

### *And one from France*

Madame ou Monsieur

Je fais partie de l'association "les Enfants d'abord" et je cherche une famille anglaise pour faire un echange. J'ai 2 garçons qui ont 16 ans et 13 ans ½. Celui de 13 ans ½ n'est pas scholarisé. Je suis professeur et je pourrai donc m'occuper tout particulièrement d'un (ou une) jeune anglais pendant une période d'environ 3 semaines, a n'importe quel moment de l'année, et je voudrais trouver une famille équivalent pour envoyer mon plus jeune fils en Angleterre.

Je vous remercie par avance.

*Mme Bouteiller, le bourg,  
19560 St Hilaire Peyroux, France*

### *Response to December newsletter*

I am writing to say how interesting the December issue of the EO magazine was. Previously I found them very dry and a bit boring.

Callie Wirll's letter was partly true and interesting. It is healthy to have, and want to have, a break from the children. She came close to being judgemental but made some good points.

Keep up the good work.

*Theresa, Berkshire (address supplied)*

## International GCSE Accounting

For many home-educators, which subjects to choose for GCSE is often a difficult decision. Many find the usual school subjects irrelevant to future plans other than in totting up the number of exam certificates gained. Many parents also feel uncertain of the level their child has so far achieved in a subject - are they ready to progress to GCSE work or not? This is where it can be refreshing to look at a course like IGCSE Accounting. It assumes no prior knowledge of accounting and, providing your child is reasonably happy working with numbers, you can rest assured that everyone else will also be starting from scratch.

Given that schools are supposedly preparing pupils for adult life, I can never understand why a subject like Accounting is so totally ignored. Although a fairly demanding syllabus - let's face it, it has no 'fun' areas, no interesting field trips, videos or light relief - it is, nevertheless, very relevant to most people's lives. Many of us end up filling in tax returns, dealing with invoices, credit notes and statements, helping with a club's accounts or even running our own business so it would seem to make sense that we should learn a little about accounting. Many parents helping their child with the course even feel pleased to have delved into this area.

The IGCSE syllabus is largely concerned with basic book-keeping and the calculation of simple profit and loss accounts and balance sheets for sole traders and partnerships. The examination consists of 2 or 3 papers, depending at which level you enter. The syllabus and past exam papers can be obtained from Cambridge Board, 1 Hills Road, Cambridge CB1 2EU or a home educator's pack for IGCSE Accounting (price £75) containing textbook, study planner, assignments and mock exam can be obtained from Little Arthur Independent School, St Martin's, Isles of Scilly, Comwall TR25 0QL. (Other subjects are also available - please send a *sae* for details).

Jenny Morton, Little Arthur School, Tel. 01720 422457

## Courses and a network to encourage confidence in natural birth

Nowadays it is unusual for women to give birth as nature intended. Are you drawn to help other women as a doula? First and foremost, a doula has herself had positive experience of giving birth, and of post birth baby nurture, and is at ease with the potential of natural childbirth.

Following my announcement about Doula courses with Dr Michel Odent in the October EO newsletter (and in several other places too...), having received fervent responses from all over the country, and particularly

EO mums, I am writing to let you know that we are offering further courses, from February onwards, in Brighton, Birmingham, Manchester, Surrey and Dorchester during 2002. For more information, contact: Ruth, 020 8675 4388, 11 Veronica Road, London SW17 8QL [paramanadoulas@hotmail.com](mailto:paramanadoulas@hotmail.com)

## Royal Institution young person's programme

Dear Sir or Madam

I have recently taken over the organisation of the Royal Institution science events for young people. We run science lectures throughout the school year. The lectures cater for children aged 8-18 and are already attended by a number of home educating families, some of whom are members of education otherwise. Please find attached\* a copy of the programme for the Spring term. Full details can be found on our new website [www.ri.ac.uk/insideout](http://www.ri.ac.uk/insideout) - which will during the next few months extend to include 'discover' areas which will focus on the content of some of our lectures in more depth. It would be great if you could mention this resource on your website, with a link to our site if possible. If I can assist in any other way, please let me know.

Kind Regards Rowan Hoban, Events Assistant

The Royal Institution is a registered charity No: 227938

### FEBRUARY

\*January removed - AR

Thu 7 Feb 10.45 & 13.30 Years 10-11 Dr Bryson Gore  
Rates of reaction... turning a whiz into a bang!  
Mon 25 Feb 10.45 Years 5-6 Dr Eric Webster  
Suck, blow and wobble: the science of musical instruments  
Mon 25 Feb 13.30 Year 4 Dr Eric Webster  
Suck, blow and wobble: the science of musical instruments  
Tue 26 Feb 11.00 Years 5-6 MATHS Bernard Bagnel  
Keep those numbers rollin'  
Thu 28 Feb 13.00 Post 16 various speakers  
The dynamic Earth Afternoon event

### MARCH

Tue 5 Mar 10.45 & 13.30 Year 4  
Frozen Flowers Dr Mervyn Black  
Tue 12 Mar 10.45 & 13.30 Years 5-6  
How hot is a cold? Dr Bryson Gore  
Wed 13 Mar 10.45 & 13.30 Year 4  
Is there a sorting hat for the natural world? Identification & classification of plants and animals Dr Sandra Knapp  
Thu 14 Mar 14.00 Years 10-11 & Post 16  
*Atoms and the atmosphere*  
Afternoon event - various speakers  
Mon 18 Mar 10.45 & 13.30 Years 5-6  
Let there be light Professor Richard Catlow  
Tue 19 Mar 11.00 Years 5-6 MATHS  
Numbers and Rumbas: Rob Eastaway and Richard Harris

### The Royal Institution

21 Albemarle Street, London W1S 4BS  
PHONE 020 7670 2969 E-MAIL [schools@ri.ac.uk](mailto:schools@ri.ac.uk)  
FAX 020 7629 3569 WEB [www.ri.ac.uk/insideout](http://www.ri.ac.uk/insideout)

## HESFES

*Further comments are still filtering in. Here is an extract from a long letter which I have just received:*

'We were at the very first HESFES - well, only on the first evening ... we were supposed to be welcoming those who arrived on the first evening ... they came "ready cliqued" and our attempts to make conversation were largely ignored, or received monosyllabic replies. We have never returned. Those who have attended since, that I have spoken to, have not been particularly happy with HESFES' (name & address supplied)

*For new readers - the August, October and December NLS carried a number of contributions on the subject of HesFes and HE meetings in general, as well as tips for organisers and attendees to avoid the pitfalls. Here are some clips from these:*

I am writing to tell others about our recent experiences as a family at HESFES 2001 ... we were looking forward to a week of meeting like-minded people ... Unfortunately, due to the lack of organisation of the event and the cliquiness of the rest of the people there, we wished we hadn't bothered and certainly won't again. My advice is: don't go unless you are going in a big group so you already form a self-sufficient support system. Julie Frew (NL 141)

After the festival there was an email asking for feedback from people who had been there so I thought I'd be helpful and send ours ... what happened next was a series of emails from the organiser, using language which I found abusive and do not wish to repeat. It seemed clear to me that he didn't want feedback that in any way disagreed with him! Julie Frew (NL 142)

We found it to be like gate-crashing on someone else's party. The people who had been lots of times before had obviously carved out a niche for themselves that formed a very effective barrier. I would echo Julie's advice of not going unless already part of a group. I always have in the back of my mind the fear that some people are put off home education by the contact they have with other home educators and that's a real shame. David Hawkrige (NL 142)

It's the organiser's responsibility to introduce people to each other and include everyone ... I realise HESFES was very large, but people could be asked on arrival if they know anyone there, and if not, they could be paired with others on their own ... Peggy Thomas (NL 143)

Our family's recommendation for meeting new people is to join the food queue. We've been to HESFES the past two years and were well aware of the tendency for people to stick with people they already know - but the food queue is different. People chat about all sorts of things, carry on debates, etc. The food is delicious, nutritious and unbelievably good value. Best of all, by not cooking yourself, it leaves everyone more time for the beach, the talks, workshops - and enjoying the company. Long live the "Anarchist Teapot" (HESFES caterers). Gina Purmann (NL 143)

I felt and know many others who agree, that Hes Fes was a good place to go to meet new friends. However, there were many people there who did come with groups and met old friends. Hes Fes is a place to deepen old friendships as well as making new ones. I hope those who wrote will try a home educating group and maybe even Hes Fes again. Go up to people. Talk to people. Take a risk and see... Leslie Safran Barson (NL 143)

I believe that there is a deep human need in us all to identify with a group of other individuals ... that special feeling of belonging is not instantly won ... What can be interpreted, in fear, as hostile cliquiness, might be, in reality, insensitivity. Those of us involved in the running of activities have a responsibility to ensure that our security with each other is not misinterpreted. After all, we each of us have been "new" at some time in our lives...we owe it to (our children) to set an example by not retreating into the safe enclave of the group, but reaching out and offering that sense of belonging to all-comers. Claire Evans (NL143)

View meeting new people with the expectation that they will know things that you don't know, have had experiences that you can benefit from and could become a dear friend ... you can only change yourself so whichever side of the fence you're on take the initiative and MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO OTHERS' AND YOUR OWN LIVES. Helen Donaldson (NL 143)

## LOCAL NEWS & CONTACTS

### Local Meetings in the Derby Area

If you run a local group or would like to attend a local group or are willing to help start one in 'he Derby area please contact me for help. I would like to create a list of names and phone numbers of those interested to circulate and get people in touch with each other.

*Steve Stamford, Derbyshire Local Contact*  
01298 78939/07976 924668  
[webmaster@peakbusiness.co.uk](mailto:webmaster@peakbusiness.co.uk)

### NEW LOCAL CONTACT

Calling all Merseyside EO members:

Hi there! I've volunteered to become the new local Contact person for EO members in Merseyside. If we don't already know each other, give me a ring sometime, as I'd love to meet you. My telephone number is 0151 733 1460.

I started home-educating my 12-year-old son in February last year because he was being bullied at school. Now we don't even think about 'school' because 'education' has become a natural and simple matter of pursuing interests together.

I look forward to welcoming new EO members in Merseyside and I hope I can be reassuring and informative. Once there are enough members in the area who are keen to meet up I hope I will be able to help with that too.

Best wishes to all Merseyside EO members and to EO members everywhere.

*Hazel Croft, 49 Macdonald Street,  
Wavertree, Liverpool 15*

### Derbyshire Local Group?

We are from South Derbyshire and are home-educating three children aged 7, 5 and 3. We are looking to meet up with other families in the South Derbyshire or Burton on Trent area who are interested in getting together to form a local group.

*Julie Loughlin, 45 New Road, Coton in the Elms, S. Derbyshire Tel. 01283 760800*

### CHRISTMAS IN EXETER

In Exeter we started having E.O. meetings on a regular basis in December 2000.

In December 2001 we held a Christmas party for all home educators in Devon.

I would just like to say ..... thank you.

Thank you to the people who thought about having the Devon Christmas party in Exeter, to the people who organized the Christmas party, to all the people who helped decorate the hall, to all the families, especially those who travelled a long way, to Kate Molyneux and her family for working so hard on the day, to the family who came all the way from Newquay and to Santa!

I know we had a lovely time and I hope everyone else did. So, thank you to everyone who made the Christmas party a great success.

*Jo Borthen, Exeter*  
*Email: [jo4eo@aol.com](mailto:jo4eo@aol.com)*

## LOCAL CONTACT UPDATE

Linda Ireneschild (SW London) will be away in the sun until June.

### New Acting Local Contacts

Merseyside Hazel Croft 01517 331460  
Northamptonshire Jane Newson 01536 418885

### Areas needing a Local Contact

North Kent/Outer SE London  
Bedfordshire, Carmarthanshire, Grampian, Isle of Man, Lancashire, London East, Manchester South, Northumberland, Strathclyde, Surrey, Tayside, West Midlands - Birmingham.

**Do you enjoy** keeping in touch with members around the country?

**Could you consider** taking on the role of keeping the Local Contact list up to date and sending regular updates to the newsletter?

**I need a replacement by August!**

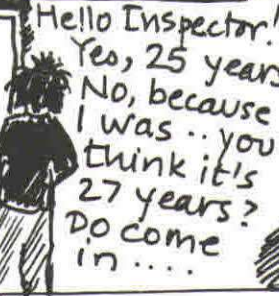
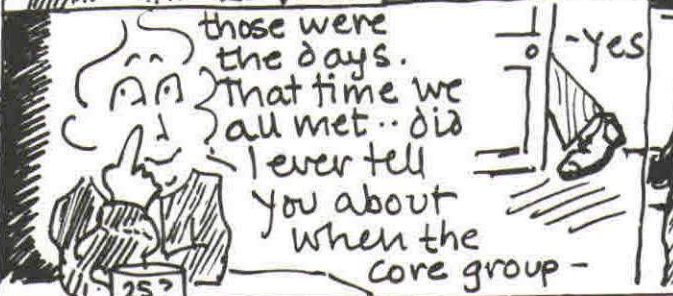
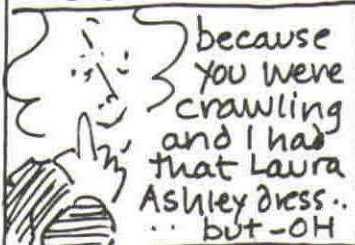
The run up to Christmas was difficult - if I failed to follow up any request please get back to me.

**Find out more** from :- Isobel Bogucki  
01403 261178 E-mail [isobelb@cheerful.com](mailto:isobelb@cheerful.com)

# EDUCATING ARCHIE

While Mrs G ruminates on yet another EO anniversary, Archie concentrates on remaining no older.

by SGG



with love to all EOers everywhere 1/2002

## ADVERTISEMENTS

### Home Educating Our Autistic Spectrum

#### Children: Paths are Made by Walking

Edited by Terri Dowty and Kitt Cowlshaw

ISBN 1-84310-037-1

Parents who home educate their children with autism or Asperger's syndrome tell their personal stories.

Web site: [www.cary.demon.co.uk/paths](http://www.cary.demon.co.uk/paths)

### 'No more school' by Meg Harper

Pub: Lion, Price: £3.99

An exciting story about a home educated boy and his school phobic friend. Read it and let me know what you think - as an author I need feedback. Good chance for the kids to do some writing!

Meg Harper, The Malt House, Silver Street, Chacombe, Banbury OX17 2JR  
[mrharper@cix.co.uk](mailto:mrharper@cix.co.uk)

### The Non-Stop Reader

A fully phonics reading scheme

- guides the parent at every stage
- leads the child one step at a time
- is enjoyed by everyone
- has witty text and illustrations
- is a complete course in one volume

By mail order: £18.50

Non-Stop Books, 26 Lathbury Rd,  
Oxford OX2 7AU 01865 554 953  
[nonstopbooks@compuserve.com](mailto:nonstopbooks@compuserve.com)  
[www.nonstopbooks.co.uk](http://www.nonstopbooks.co.uk)

### Wise Owl Educational Shareware

PO Box 334 Abingdon OX14 2YB

01235 529808 [wiseowlsw@aol.com](mailto:wiseowlsw@aol.com)

UK's only children's shareware library, specializing in educational programmes and games. Ages 2-16+. 900+ titles (DOS, Windows 3.1, 95 and 98) 3½ and 5½ media. £3 per disk.

Free catalogue and advice <http://members.aol.com/wiseowlsw/index.html>

### Wanted: 'Oranges and Lemons' Tape

Does anyone have a copy of this children's tape? We have the Ian Beck book but our tape is worn out.

Please contact: Meg Harper 01295 711991  
[mrharper@cix.co.uk](mailto:mrharper@cix.co.uk)

### The New Forest Small School

We are pleased to announce that from January 2002 we shall be running a Primary Class

up to eight children 6-11

Flexi-schooling

enclosed garden - with the New Forest all around us.

For further details call

Petrea 01590 644958 or Nick 02380 283727

### Little Arthur Independent School

Home-educator packs in KS 3 Maths, English and Science (NC based). International GCSE packs in Maths, English, Accounting, History, Natural Economy (Ecology), Core Physics and core Biology. From £60

Send A5 SAE for details:

Little Arthur Independent School,  
St Martin's, Isles of Scilly,  
Cornwall TR25 0QL

### Human Scale Education

One day introductory workshops in setting up a small school or learning centre.

23rd Feb 2002 - Bristol

23rd March 2002 - Sheffield

10am - 5.30pm Cost £50 (£40 HSE members)

HSE, 96 Carlingcott, Bath BA2 8AW

01275 332516

[hse@clara.net](mailto:hse@clara.net) [www.hse.org.uk](http://www.hse.org.uk)

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

## ADVERTISEMENTS

### Holidays in West Wales

for EO families on organic smallholding near beautiful beaches. Inexpensive holidays in converted barn, holiday caravan or camping.

Barn £100-£120, Caravan £70-£85 per week  
David Witt, Cwmrhaffau, Sarnau, Llandysul.  
SA44 6QZ 01239 811118

holidays@cwmrhaffau.demon.co.uk  
www.cwmrhaffau.demon.co.uk

### South West France Holidays

Permaculture base run by EO family offers small campsite (basic facilities) also furnished 18ft Tipi and cabin available. Organic veg and meals on offer. Beautiful, peaceful area, clean air, marvellous walking, good fishing nearby.

Enquiries: Laura Havard, Lausoprens, 82140, St Antonin Noble Val, France or phone after  
April 10th 0033 563 30 89 55

### The Leas Beach Park

Small EO family run caravan site with touring pitches right next to a beautiful sandy beach. Local shops, restaurants and pubs within easy walking distance. £5 donation to EO.

20% discount to home educators.

Tony and Jos Underhill, The Leas Beach Park,  
Mill lane, Bacton Norwich NR12 0HS  
01692 652115 www.theleasbeachpark.co.uk

### Short Term Accommodation Available

Room in vegetarian house. Up to 4 weeks.  
North London/Herts. Ideal for day trips.  
20 mins from central London.

7 mins walk from Theobald Grove station.

Map available. Children very welcome  
£7 per night singles, £10 per night couples  
01992 426710

### The Louise Verran Fund

Invites applications for consideration in November 2001 from home educated young people for help towards the cost of specific projects. For further information and application form please send SAE to:

The Secretary, The Louise Verran Fund,  
Kelda Cottage, The Reddings, Lydbrook,  
Glocs GL17 9SX

To make a donation to the fund please contact the same address. Thank you.

### Protest Against the Scottish Guidelines.

March on the Scottish Parliament

Thursday 7th February.

Please come along and show your support. Gathering at the rear of Waverley Station, East Market Street from 11 am, Marching at 12 noon. Children are encouraged to wear their brightest clothes and bring percussion instruments (home-made or otherwise) to play.

There will be a balloon release, and speeches from politicians and home-educators.

Free overnight accommodation has been generously offered by local HE families.

There are also reasonably-priced rail tickets on offer from GNER for people travelling from the East of England.

Please contact for details: Jackie Turner, 3/5 Murrayburn Gardens, Edinburgh EH14 2QA  
0131 442 3886 jackie.turner2@btopenworld.com

### HES FES 2002

The Home Educators' Seaside Festival.

The World's biggest gathering of home educators now in its fifth year

Saturday 12th to Saturday 18th May at Charmouth Dorset. World heritage site, few mins from beach, excellent camping facilities.

Included in price are lots of activities, workshops, HE conference, carnival, dancing, live music and more.

Festival & Camping - Adult £32 Child £22

Festival (non camping) - Adults £21 Child £15  
For more info visit www.hesfes.co.uk or send a STAMPED SAE to: HES FES 2002 PO Box 20284

London NW1 3WY

020 7388 0559 info@hesfes.co.uk

To place an advert: Advertising in the newsletter is free, but if you are running a business or hoping to make a profit from your advert please send and appropriate donation. Cheques should be made payable to 'Education Otherwise'. Please remember that EO is run entirely by volunteers and has no income except members' subscriptions. Adverts should be limited to 1/8 page or 50 words and sent (with any donation) to the advertising editor (address inside front cover).

## Regional Diary

Events organisers please remember when giving full details of events 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 included automatically in every issue. Please notify any changes or meetings no longer taking place to:

**Martine Archer, 43 Cecil St, Harrogate HG1 4NP  
01423 858918**

### BATH

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

Contact: Louise Jensen 01225 840735

### BERKSHIRE

Woolinks Leisure Centre Burghfield Mondays 1pm.

Tuesdays swimming at Winsor Leisure Centre noon onwards. £2.80

Wednesdays ice-skating at John Nike Leisure Centre, Bracknell 2-4pm £1.50 show EO card at reception.

Contact: Pat Connor 0118 9662123

Heros Club Holyport Maidenhead. Mondays 10-3

Regular sports, dancing, pottery crafts and cooking. £25 month or £10 family/day

Contact: Dawn 01628 783107

Also for local newsletter

[www.zednetdemo.co.uk/2eddin](http://www.zednetdemo.co.uk/2eddin)

Newbury group on Fridays for younger children.

Contact: Gillian 01491 671328

Lambourn. Weekly meeting on a farm for crafts, cooking and nature walks, group based on respect for each other and our world and an unhurried childhood.

Contact: Tracey or Roge 01793 610448

[roge.tracey@virgin.net](mailto:roge.tracey@virgin.net)

### BIRMINGHAM

Last Wednesday of the month, Central Library 10.30-

1.30 Free monthly newsletter (send SAE)

Contact: Jackie or Alan Harley 0121 243 8242

22, Danzey Grove, Kings Heath, Birmingham B14 6JY

### BRISTOL

Tuesdays, trampolining with coach am followed by

workshops at Totterdown YMCA. Friday am ice-skating

Contact: Kathy Nott 0117 966 8265

Thursdays meeting at St Pauls Adventure Playground 1-

3pm (all above term time only)

Contact: Carla 9354389

### BUCKS

Newsletter for Bucks/Northants

Contact: Dawn 01908 569380

[Dawnwaddington@hotmail.com](mailto:Dawnwaddington@hotmail.com)

South Bucks: fortnightly meetings for craft, activities,

play, speakers, drama, trips etc.

Contact: Jackie 01753 886924

Dorothy 01494 782864

### CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Cambridge regular meetings and outings.

Contact: Penny 01223 526441

[penny.k@ntlworld.com](mailto:penny.k@ntlworld.com)

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

Contact: Audrey Hill 01480 219881

Peterborough weekly visits and outings

Contact: Janet 01733 554436

### CHESHIRE

Contact Gill Wilson 0161 443 8723 for North Cheshire/Stockport

Meeting 1st Wednesday of the month for crafts games and activities

Contact: Carrie 01270 875 633

Sue 01270 883 978 (for S. Cheshire)

### CLEVELAND AND DURHAM

Contact: Pauline Butterworth 01642 899247

### CORNWALL

Twice weekly events all round the county. CHEERS newsletter

Contact: Anna Wheeler, Cambrose Farm, Redruth, TR16

4HT 01209 890378

[anna@wheeler19.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:anna@wheeler19.fsnet.co.uk)

### CUMBRIA

Informal gatherings for socializing, support and activities.

Kendal alternate Wednesdays Castle St Youth Centre 12.30-3.30

Penrith alternate Tuesdays Castledown Community Centre 1.30-3.30

Contact: Sarah Cook 01768 896019

### DERBYSHIRE

Chesterfield new group meets every Wednesday morning.

Contact: Karen 01246 865532

Kaz 01246 205463 Yvonne 01246 555645

### DEVON

Contact: Becca 01404 549479 (East/North Devon)

Contact: Sammy and Nick 01548 830716 (South Devon)

Exeter fortnightly meetings at Belmont Park Community

Hut restarts 5th Sept 2-4pm

Contact Annie 01392 434167

Crediton fortnightly meetings 12-3.30 at Q.E. Community

Centre (opposite Parish church) starting 12th September

Contact: Emma 01837 82365

Pottery session, to be arranged.

Contact: Neil 01392 255912

Brixham regular meetings

Contact: Sally 01803 856 862

South Devon meetings every Wednesday

Contact: Hannah/Gordon 01803 762788

[lindnich@eurobell.co.uk](mailto:lindnich@eurobell.co.uk)

Penny 01626 360640

Bridget 01803 862158

South Dartmoor Leisure Centre, Ivybridge - swimming,

badminton, basketball, soft play/shapes, £5 per family

11.30 - 1.30 every fortnight/month from 8 November

(Cafe available with hot food until 2pm)

Scrapstore: South Devon Play Resource Centre, The Old

Chicken House, Craft Education, Dartington, Totnes

(Mon, Tue, Thur 9-3; Sat 10-12) free use on production

of EO membership card (for next 12 months), select art/

craft materials, usually £1 carrier bag full

(Devon continues over page)

National Trust, Devon - Card held by Nick Vidal-Hall gives free membership/entry to NT sites to all Devon EO members for pre-booked 'educational' visits. Prospective organisers (& for details of all 3 above) Contact: Sammy and Nick Vidal-Hall 01548 830716

#### DEVON EAST/DORSET WEST

Lyme Regis, Axminster, Bridport, Chard  
Contact: Henry & Suzanne 01297 444207  
Ann 01297 561070

Habiba 0845 4582984 (local rate)

#### DORSET

Regular meetings, keep in touch  
Contact: Christine 01258 880355  
Rosemary 01747 853 593

#### ESSEX

Colchester fortnightly meetings,  
Wednesdays £2.50 per family  
Contact: Sue 01206 520284  
35 Lethe Grove, Clochester, Essex CO2 8RG  
Monthly in Chelmsford and weekly in Southend.  
Essex Epicycle newsletter gives full details.  
Contact: Corinne 07802 630693  
epicycle@wavy.org  
New group East London/Essex area  
Contact: Gill 020 8597 8537  
Swimming at Goresbrook Leisure Pool, Ripple Rd,  
Dagenham, every Tuesday 1pm onwards  
Contact: Cindy 020 8553 0964

#### GLOUCESTERSHIRE

1st Tuesday of the month at Twynning  
Every Thursday swimming and trampolining.  
Other outings every month.  
Contact: Rob and Fiona 01684 290087

#### HAMPSHIRE

Portsmouth EO. Warm and welcoming group  
with kids 5-15 meet Fridays for art, craft, music,  
chat and outings  
Contact: Julie 023 92 640242  
ACTIVEO meet 3 times a week within 25 miles of  
Petersfield. All welcome.  
Contact: 01428 712394

Fareham/Gosport area, friendly welcoming group.  
Contact: Gayle 01329 823112  
gaylie@btinternet.com  
Basingstoke/Winchester area, new group starting.  
Contact: Michelle or Mark 07966 159017  
Michelle.virgo@i12.com  
New group for under 10s, Aldershot area  
Contact: Emma Jevans 01252 350034

#### HANTS/WEST SUSSEX

Activities and support, Solent area EO at  
St. Faith's Church Hall, the Pallant, Havant,  
alternate Mondays 1-5pm  
Contact: Bernadette 01243 264837  
Julie 023 92 640242  
Val 01243 641221

#### HEREFORDSHIRE

1st Monday of the month for meetings various venues.  
Contact: Kath and Malcolm 01432 830883  
homed@apccs.co.uk

#### HERTFORDSHIRE

Drumming, all ages, Tuesdays.  
Numeracy, literacy and parenting health sessions.  
Literacy home study programme 3-10 years. Bentley  
Heath Barnet.  
Cuffley Outdoor Centre, group every Friday afternoon  
Contact: Priscilla 01438 840674  
olsandpjs@aol.com

#### ISLE OF WIGHT

I. W. E. O group: craft sessions, visits, swimming,  
theatre, picnics, bar-b-qs, mutual support, especially  
older EO kids but new members and visitors always  
welcomed.

Contact: Jude 01983 531680  
Isle of Wight Learning Zone workshops, social events  
and newsletter.

Contact: Shara 01983 562313  
Alison 01983 810862

#### KENT

Regular meetings and activities  
Canterbury  
Contact: Irene 01227 709570  
Medway towns  
Contact: Bridget 01634 234938  
Tunbridge Wells  
Contact: Kim 01892 863941  
French for beginners through songs and games. Yoga for  
children.

Contact: Katherine 01892 863958  
For events listings send SAE Amanda Mackensie, 16  
Brambletree Cotts, Borstal, Rochester ME1 3TN

#### Bromley

Contact: Claire 0181 460 7347  
Claire@wadefamily99.freeserve.co.uk  
GCSE Science for HEers starting at West Kent College,  
Tonbridge for 13+ Also practical electronics. For details  
Contact: Kate 01732 458804  
Katemorgan2000@yahoo.co.uk

#### LANCASHIRE

Regular meetings  
Contact: Angelica 01254 603 497  
Outings and get-togethers  
Contact: Brenda or Diana 01254 389673  
Fortnightly play sessions at Botany Bay, Chorley,  
Junction 8 M61  
Contact: Jacqueline 01204 361072  
Astronomy event at The Planet Earth Centre Todmorden.  
Friday 22nd Feb 5.30-7.30  
Max 30 people. Cost £1.50-£2.50 depending on  
numbers.

Contact: Jacqueline 01204 361072

#### LEICESTERSHIRE

Frequent meetings for play, craft, walks, hanging out,  
singing, swimming, science, skating and much more.  
Contact: Lise 0116 242 5802

#### LINCOLNSHIRE

Every Monday 1pm onwards church hall in Cleethorpes  
Contact: Caroline 01472 690738  
Boston area group. Regular meetings/outings.  
Contact: Gill 01205 871399  
Ross 01205 870679

## LONDON

Tuesdays Clissold Park. All welcome.

Contact: Charlotte 0207 254 0419

Wednesdays Honor Oak playground.

Contact: Steve 8680 2933

Thursdays Lee 11-1

Contact: Clare 020 8480 0740

Thursdays once monthly during term time rollerblading  
Kidbroke

Contact: Fiona 020 8852 9756

bettleslake@clara.net

Fridays fortnightly at Sydenham 11.30-2.30

Contact: Chrystia and Keith 8776 8597

Fridays alternate fortnight Forest Hill Nature Reserve  
11.30

Contact: Dave 8692 4080

Bromley

Contact: Claire 8460 7347

NW London Otherwise Club

Contact: Leslie 0181 969 0893

Harrow every other Friday plus swimming Thursdays and  
other stuff.

Contact: Sue 0771 802 2677

Vivienne TIMSHARKEY@aol.com

W. London HE group every Tuesday in Ealing/Rickmond  
for fun and activities.

Contact: Naomi and Stephen 0208 567 7589

Lewisham EO group Thursdays weekly.

Contact: Clare 8333 9455

## MANCHESTER

Monthly formal art lessons at Stockport Art Gallery £1.50

Monthly meeting at Stockport library

E-mail young writers group Ed Wilson

wilson-net@lineone.net

MADCOW newsheet, send SAEs: Gill Wilson, 20 Brook  
Rd, Heaton Chapel, Stockport SK4 5BZ

ComputingSkills 1st and 2nd Saturdays at moores family  
home, limited places

Contact: Karen 01204 573136

Manley Park Group monthly Wednesdays.

Contact: Julie 0161 860 7589

## NORFOLK

NEON gives details of all events £1.50 plus 4 large SAEs

Contact: Steve Williams, North Cottage, Crostwick,  
Norwich NR12 7BD

Workshops/social meetings 1st and 3rd Thursday

Contact: Sue 01503 738494

## NORFOLK/SUFFOLK BORDER

Diss area

Contact: Judith 01379 890622

Lowestoft area

Contact: Lin 01502 741097

## NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Tuesdays and Fridays weekly activities.

Contact: Mr and Mrs F. Benham, 4 Pilgrim Way,

Wellingborough, NN8 2A (send sae)

## NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Weekly meeting for full list,

Contact: Wendy 0115 9114312

Louise 01773 780634

East Midlands Christian Home Educators 1st Tuesday of

the month 10-2 Stapleford Baptist church, Stapleford

Contact: Jo 0115 8770281

Julia 0115 8494083

## OXFORDSHIRE

Classes in creative writing. Monthly Parents meeting,  
monthly Drop-in, also regular museum trips and outings  
Local newsletter.

Contact: Wendy 01865 514973

## SCOTLAND

Fife: outings and get-togethers

Contact: Karen 01334 655361

k.spy@btinternet.com

Irvine weekly drama Fridays for 5-9 and 9+

Contact: Rhona 01294 273644

Monthly activities Eglinton Country Park, Wednesday  
afternoons under 10s

Contact: Shirley 01563 540063

Other visits coming up

Contact: Vivien 01563 537428

Highlands meetings

Contact: Rebecca 01667 404676

## SHROPSHIRE

Activities and outings

Contact: Val 01952 502225

## SOMERSET

Frome and beyond (FAB) home educators support  
group. Social gatherings, outings and newsletter.

Contact: Sally 01749 841554

Helen 01373 465260

## STAFFORDSHIRE/SOUTH CHESHIRE/NORTH SALOP

Fortnightly meetings

Contact: Patricia 01785 851150

Stafford every 2nd and 4th Wednesday in village hall for  
games craft etc. 12 - 3.30

Contact: Nicola 01785 612410

Alsager - 1st Wednesday of the month at YPCC for craft,  
music, games, chat.

Contact: Caroline 01270 875 633

Sue 01270 883978 Suedavies@tesco.net

## SUFFOLK

Regular meetings every 3rd Friday 10.30 - 2.30

£2.50 for family, shared lunch.

Contact: Sarah 01379 783678

## SURREY

Guildford area:

Theatre bookings

Contact: Tisha 01483 898575

Skating during term time Friday 1-4

Contact: Jane 01420 88188

Under 10s

Contact: Nicky 01483 232080

Nicki's Woods fortnightly

Contact: Nicki 01306 884741

Dorking/Reigate area. Craft session Feb 4th 2002,  
also anyone in this area looking for new activities for 11+.

Contact: Helen Burnett 01737 243606

## SUSSEX

Monthly newsletter £8pa/£4 six mths, cheques to ESEO to Ian Lawes, 35 Waldegrave rd, Brighton BN1 6GR  
Contact: Bo 01580 201681 (East Sussex)  
Isobel 01403 261178 (West Sussex)  
Friday EO club at Lindfield  
Contact: Liz 01444 414058  
Home Educators Hastings Area, regular arts, craft, gym, outings and meetings.  
Contact: Ali 01424 814175  
Eastbourne Home Educators Club, alternate Fridays 9.30 - 11.30 Shinewater Community Centre 75p per child.  
Contact: Angelique 01323 509702  
Worthing: we are setting up a learning center for children of all ages in September, meeting once/twice weekly. Advice and ideas welcome.  
Contact: Sam Kruger 01903 233799

## TYNESIDE

Monthly meetings, visits etc.  
Contact: Linda 0191 4567007  
Regular outings and monthly get-togethers  
Contact: Lillian 01912809150

## WALES

Cardigan area social meetings and outings on Mondays  
Contact: Yvette 0845 458 2951  
Swansea monthly meetings in Llanelli area  
Contact: Sue 01269 861902  
South Wales. Large group meets at Swansea YMCA most Tuesdays for arts, crafts, games and more. Also regular outings.  
Contact: Juliet 01639 760987  
Geraldine 01792 405894  
Frankie fran.kie@ntlworld.com  
NE Wales/Borders weekly gym/trampolining in Wrexham (thurs) various meetings in Oswestry, W. Cheshire/ NE Wales. Also sports and ice skating at Deeside Leisure Centre.  
Contact: Genny 01978 757489  
49 Westminster rd, Moss Valley, Wrexham LL11 6DH £2 for a year's listing.  
eo@7times7.freereserve.co.uk  
South Wales regular group activities and newsletter £3 pa. Weekly ice-skating.  
Contact: Dawn 01452 540019  
dawnandmike@cableinet.co.uk  
Beverly 02920797628  
Bev1.French@btinternet.com  
Cathy 02920 460203  
Gwynedd Mondays swimming at Bangor  
Contact: Louisa 01248 361254  
Friday swimming at Porth Madog Weekly meetings at Tremadog Thursdays.  
Contact Jo 01766 512330  
Pembrokeshire EO swim and sauna: Haverfordwest pool, Dew St. 3pm at main reception, now fortnightly. Call to check dates.  
Contact: Yvette 0845 458 9251

## WARWICKSHIRE

The group usually meets 2 Thursdays a month; at Wolston nr Coventry and for an outing in the Coventry/Warwicks area.

Contact: Helen Hall 01926 771958

## WEST MIDLANDS

Fortnightly meetings at Coseley. Monthly science club, resource centre and time for socializing. All welcome.  
Contact Penny 01922 745465 or Joy 0121 585 6450  
pennyclarke@homeschool.freereserve.co.uk  
Regular meeting Halesowen library 2nd Thursday meet in the coffee lounge 11-3. Contact: Joy 0121 585 6450  
HELM newsletter for full details of regular meetings and events through the region. £7.20pa, contact Joy  
JoyBeasley@b-bunch.freereserve.co.uk

## WILTSHIRE

Informal meetings in Calne and surrounding area for socializing, activities and outings.  
Contact: Janet 01249 818672 (for outings)  
Heather 01249 822630 (for meetings)  
Outings and visits every 1st Tuesday pm lower Street Hall, off Netherhampton Rd, Salisbury 2 - 5pm.  
Contact: Vicky 1722 324863 or Sam 01794 342041

## WORCESTERSHIRE

Regular activity meetings and outings in N. Worcs area  
Contact: Gail 01562 822034 gail@tqmi.co.uk  
Worcester Contact: Rachel 01527 596198

## YORKSHIRE NORTH

Regular meetings and visits. Send two 2nd class stamps for quarterly newsheet.  
Contact: Sarah 01904 750324 sarah@wollny.org.uk

## YORKSHIRE EAST

Regular meetings and visits. Send two 2nd class stamps for quarterly newsheet Contact: Alison 01405 769902

## YORKSHIRE SOUTH

Tuesdays 12-3 term time at Highfield Adventure Playground. Free entry, small contribution for craft materials. Off London rd/Abbeydale rd. Contact: Annette 0114 2583502 or Fiona 0114 22751142  
Thursday weekly informal social meetings. All welcome  
Contact: Angie 0114 2817466  
Swimming fortnightly 2nd Tues. 12.00 Hillborough Leisure Centre and 4th Wed. 12.30 at Bamsley Metrodome  
Contact: Ian 0114 2817466

## YORKSHIRE WEST

Outings and activities Contact: Eva 01535 274520  
Last Thursday of the month 11-1.30 at Civic Centre Huddersfield. Contact: Tracey 01484 317176  
2nd Friday of the month 1 - 4 pm at Moortown Baptist church £2.50 per family  
Contact: Eva 01535 274520 or Susan 0113 268 1137  
Swimming (term time) Tuesdays Bradford  
Contact: Eva 01535 274520  
Huddersfield sports Centre  
Contact: Tracey 01484 317176  
Skating Fridays (except the week of the Leeds Meeting)  
Contact: Francis 01274 884750  
Astronomy event at The Planet Earth Centre Todmorden.  
Friday 22nd Feb 5.30 - 7.30  
Max 30 people. Cost £1.50 - £2.50 depending on numbers. Contact: Jacqueline 01204 361072

## Education Otherwise Adverts

### **Steve: A Story of Home Education**

Available from the author.

£4.50 (+£1 p&p) Details from

Mrs Margaret Stevens 01844 343 928

To order send cheque payable to Education

Otherwise to: High Beech, Lower Rd, Looseley Row, Princes Risborough, Bucks HP27 0NU

### **Educating Children at home by Alan Thomas**

(Cassell 1998) This book covers research into 100 home educating families in a delightfully readable format. There are accounts of different methods and lots of quotes from families. Special price to members £9.50 from: 85 Coleridge Rd, London N8 5EG (cheques payable to Alan Thomas)

### **Promoting EO**

Diane Green has produced an excellent flyer for college libraries and other places that might buy this package. It consists of the book *School Is Not Compulsory* and our video *Education Otherwise* and is an excellent way to introduce students and others to home education.

Do you know of specific contacts in colleges or libraries who might influence the buying of books or videos? Please send these to Diane. Perhaps you would be willing to send out/hand out some of these flyers, again contact Diane with the number of flyers you would like.

Diane Green, 18 Colne Cres, Warehouse Hill, Marsden, Huddersfield  
DH7 6AD Tel: 01484 846 946

### **EO T-shirts**

Good quality white cotton t-shirts printed with EO logo (red triangle kicked open by running children) £5 adult (L, XL)

£3.50 (3/4, 5/6, 7/8, 9/11, 12/13)

p&p up to 6 shirts £2, 7+ £4

Pat Connor, 2 Whitegates Lane,  
Reading, Berks RG6 1ED

### **EO Car Stickers**

Help spread the word. Please send a reasonably large SAE to: Ali Willer, 28 Cozens Hardy Rd, Sprowston, Norwich NR7 8QF

### **Resources Booklet**

50 page booklet giving information on different curriculum materials aimed at 5-11 year olds available to home educators who are interested in a more structured approach. Send £1 coin with your address to:

H. Turnbull, Hadlow House, 2 Hadlow Rd, Sidcup, Kent DA14 4AF

Or get a free RTF copy by e-mail  
henrietta.turnbull@ntlworld.com

### **Resources for Older Children**

Information on curriculum materials for later years. For a copy please send 60p to cover printing and postage with your address to:

G. Dove, 302, High Road, Chadwell heath, Romford, Essex RM6 6AJ

Free e-mail copy from:

gillchris@willrich.fsnet.co.uk

## EDUCATION OTHERWISE BUSINESS

### Jobs Jobs Jobs Jobs Jobs

**New members needed for the Education Otherwise Council.** To find out more about what is involved speak to any Council Member (phone numbers inside back cover).

**Urgently needed: Enquiries secretaries' coordinator** experience of enquiries important. For information about what the job involves please contact Pam Bellingon on 0116 282 7929

### EO 25 years celebration

29th August to 2nd September 2002

At Beaumanor Hall in Leicestershire:

#### **volunteers needed**

to help organise this event.

Please contact *Penny Clarke, Jill Fisher, Celia McDonagh or Janet Wilkinson*  
(phone numbers inside the back cover)

### New e-mail list for EO business only.

This club is for members to discuss the business of the organisation. Members who wish to join should go to the club and then follow the joining instructions at: <http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/educationotherwise>

Their EO membership will then be checked. It is hoped that this list will provide a forum for more involvement by members in the running of the organization.

### Home education in the press

For some time we have been maintaining a collection of press articles about home education.

If any member comes across articles or radio or television programmes about home education could they please send a copy to :

*Ann Kennedy Smith, 21 Kimberley Road,  
Cambridge, CB4 1HG*

## Back Page Part Two

### *Get involved and join a small group.*

**Finance:** Garry Humphreys, Lynda Hitchman, Celia McDonagh, Ann Samuel Till, Ken Grindlay

**Enquiries:** Pam Bellinger, Geraldine Adams, Edwina Theunissen

**Publications:** Jill Fisher, Gary Podmore, Penny Clarke, Lucy Charlton, Chris Harper, Ali Willer

**Media:** Eva O'Rourke, Fiona Brookes, Celia McDonagh, Belinda Harris-Reid

**Business Practice Group:** Jill Fisher, Priscilla Park-Weir, Pam Bellinger, Martine Archer

**DfES Team:** Anne Wade, Jill Fisher, Gwen Baldock, Ann Samuel Till

**LEA/EA Group:** Isobel Bogucki, Jill Fisher, Anne Wade, Rob Wade, Gary Podmore,

**Communications:** Jill Fisher, Priscilla Park-Weir, Richard Eaton, Penny Clarke

**Scottish Group:** Ann Samuel Till, Lucy McAuley, Anne Wade, Jill Fisher, Gwen Baldock

**Information for other organizations:** Penny Clarke, Priscilla Park-Weir, Martina Macklin

**Grievances and Complaints**  
Celia McDonagh, 15, Kirkby Court, Craiglee, Dr, Atlantic Warf, Cardiff CF10 4BS 029 20454227  
Jill Fisher, 0116 2128120, Isobel Bogucki

*For more information contact any of the council members listed (in bold).*

New volunteers for any of the groups most welcome, with expertise or just an interest.

### **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:** VACANT

**North West:** Marina Orme 019467  
28313 marinaatthelakes@aol.com

**North East:** Eva O'Rourke 01535 274520  
evaandmary@aol.com

**Midlands:** Helen Donaldson 01889 882043  
serf@unappreciated.co.uk

**Wales:** Celia McDonagh 029 20454227  
celiamcdonagh@yahoo.co.uk

**East Anglia:** Ali Willer 01603 401020  
simon.whitehall@tesco.net

**South West:** Belinda Harris-Reid 01364  
643343 bline@compuserve.com

**South East:** Karen Ingelbrecht 01303 254787  
pencraft@ukonline.com

**London(1):** VACANT

**London(2):** VACANT

**Ireland:** VACANT (Volunteers needed)

## Who does What in EO

### Council Members

*If you have a problem contact your nearest council member:*

**Geraldine Adams** (N. London) 0207 2634922  
**Martine Archer** (N. Yorks) 01423 858916  
**Jude Ashley-Walker** (Isle of Wight) 01983 531680  
**Pam Bellinger** (Leicester) 0116 282 7929  
**Isobel Bogucki** (W. Sussex) 01403 261178  
**Penny Clarke** (W. Midlands) 01922 745465  
**Lynda Hitchman** (Berks) 0118 961 4466  
**Jill Fisher** (Leics) 0116 2128120  
**Garry Humphreys** (Lincs) 01205 871399  
**Celia McDonagh** (Wales) 029 20454227  
**Gary Podmore** (Yorks) 0114 2585702  
**Eleanor Stapleton** (N. London) 0208 8841368  
**Jenny Stevens** (W. Sussex) 01243 783469  
**Anne Wade** (Middx) 0208 9047155  
**Dawn Waddington** (Bucks) 01908 569380  
**Ann Samuel Till** (Scotland) 0131 5566271

### Membership

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

**Lynda Hitchman**, 31 Audley St., Reading, Berks  
RG30 1BP Tel: 0118 9614466  
[database@education-otherwise.org](mailto:database@education-otherwise.org)

### Stationery

Leaflets, posters, membership forms, car stickers:  
**Ali Willer**, 28 Cozens Hardy Rd., Sprowston, Norwich  
NR7 8QF (donations towards postage welcome, 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 SAE to: **Hazel Hutton**  
39 Millfield Gardens, Keswick, Cumbria CA12 4PD  
Tel: 017687 72546 [hhutton422@aol.com](mailto:hhutton422@aol.com)  
(please ring to check availability of items before ordering)

### Contact with LEA

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

### Small Jobs

**Martina Macklin**, 16 Victoria St, Wall Heath,  
Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 0JJ  
Tel: 01384 833 883

### Useful contacts

**Single Parent Family Contact:** **Sarah Martin**,  
Lammas, 34 Cowslip Drive, Little thetford, Ely, Cambs,  
CB6 3JD 01353 648716

**Special Needs:** **Christine Waterman**, 85 Elfrida Rd,  
Watford, Herts WD1 8AT 01923 464773

**School Phobia:** **Geraldine Adams** 0207 263 4922

**Autonomous Education Support and advice:**

**Sammy and Nick Vidal-Hall**, Home Croft,  
Brownston St, Modbury, Devon PL21 0QR  
01548 830716

**GCSE Contact:** (Vacant)

**College Contact:** **Kathy Chilton** 01969 623707

**Teenage Support:** **Geraldine Adams** 0207 263 4922

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

**Research Contact (acting)** **Pam Vickers**

25 Boxley Rd, Walderslade, Chatham, Kent  
Home: 01634 671507 Work: 01227 712206

**Company Secretary (acting):** **Pam Bellinger**

56 Beech Drive, Braunstone, Leicester LE3 3DA  
0116 282 7929

**Treasurer (acting):** **Garry Humphreys**

Three Stacks, Wicken lane, Old Leake, Boston, Lincs  
PE22 9QE 01205 871 399

**Newsletter Coordinator:** **Anne Rix**, The Orchard,

Hembury, Frithelstock, Torrington, Devon, EX38 8JT  
01237 451535 [anne@annerix.demon.co.uk](mailto:anne@annerix.demon.co.uk)

**Local Contact Coordinator:** **Isobel Bogucki**

20 Rusper Rd, Horsham, W. Sussex RH12 4BD  
01403 261178

**Enquiries Secretaries Coordinator:**

**Edwina Theunissen** 01978 661 882

**Membership Secretaries Coordinator:**

**Pam Bellinger**, 56 Beech Drive, Braunstone, Leicester  
LE3 3DA 0116 282 7929

**Chair:** **Jill Fisher**, 54 Ratcliffe Rd, Leicester

LE2 3TD 0116 212 8120

# education otherwise

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

Our principal aims are to:

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

For further information send an A5 s.a.e. to:  
P.O. BOX 7420  
LONDON N9 9SG

HELPLINE 0870 7300074

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

Education Otherwise Association Ltd, Registered Charity No. 1055120

