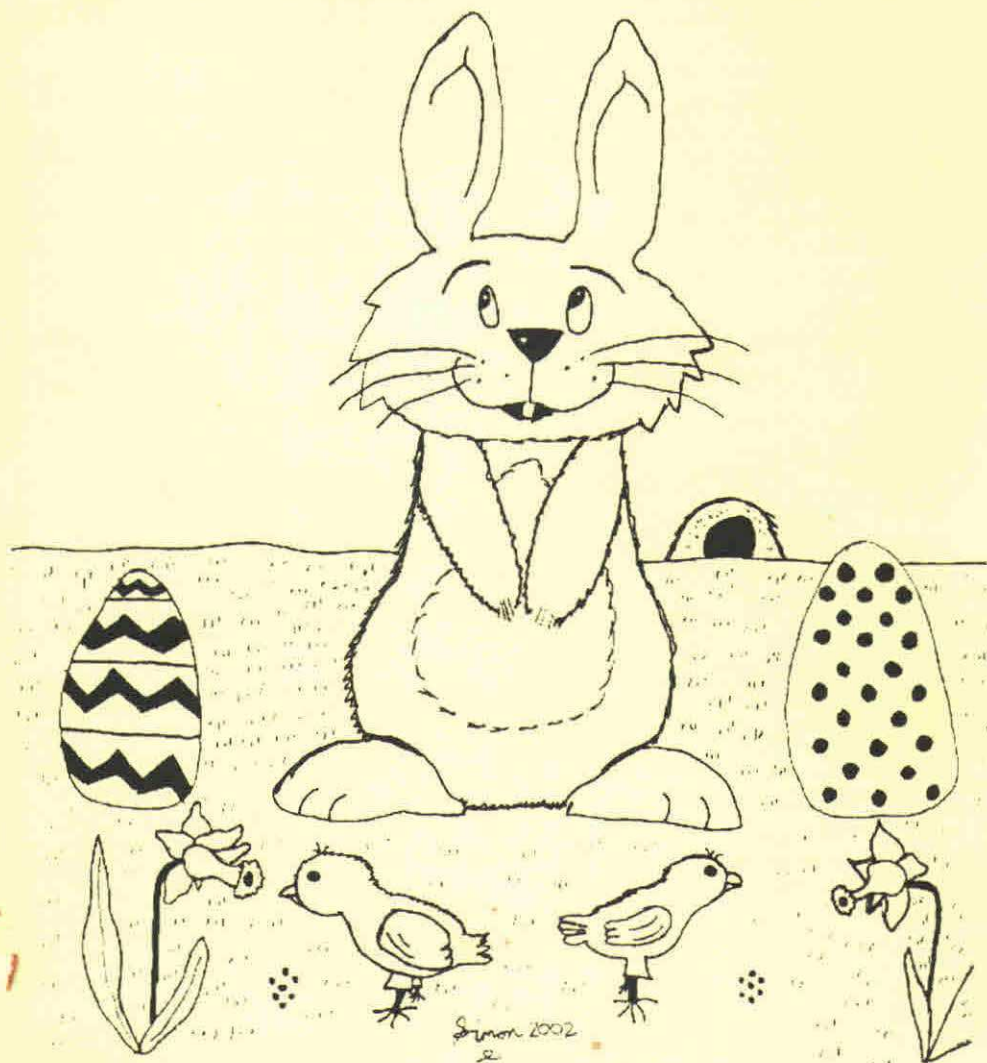


education otherwise



April 2002 No. 145

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Please send contributions via the most appropriate section editor above

DEADLINE FOR THE JUNE ISSUE IS 1ST MAY 2002

Please mark material 'for publication' and include your name, address, phone number and email (if you have it) as we may need to contact you to discuss your contribution (though details may be withheld from publication on request).

Please also ensure your EO subscription is up-to-date.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
BOOK REVIEWS AND RESOURCES	2
SPECIAL SECTION:	
Educational Philosophy III	8
HOME ED. IN SCOTLAND	22
ARTICLES:	
EO Family's Story	24
Dances of Universal Peace	26
(EO) No thanks dad!	26
... Monkton Wyld Community	27
LETTERS PAGES	28
EO AT THE EDUCATION SHOW ..	31
HES FES	32
EDUCATING ARCHIE	33
HOME ED. IN THE NEWS	34
ADVERTISEMENTS	37
REGIONAL DIARY	40
EO ADS/BUSINESS	44
LEAP GROUP REPORT	46
(Archives returns next issue)	

Thanks to Simon for cover picture

Co-ordinatorial

YOUR IDEAS ARE NEEDED...

FIRST - please retrieve the separate questionnaire about Council membership and terms of office from under the sofa, read the introduction from Jill and give the matter your consideration. OK, I know it's boring old organisational detail, but it is also an example of a very thorough form of democracy in action. EO is all about empowerment, and this is a chance for members to influence the way YOUR organisation is run. No, don't stick it behind the Mothers Day/Easter (and, in my case, Christmas - still!) cards on the mantle-piece ... tick the boxes right now, find an envelope - you don't even need a stamp as it's FREEPOST - and put it by the front door (better still, send a runner to the postbox straight away, then you'll have some leisure for the next bit).

SECOND - The suggestion of upgrading this publication into a genuine magazine which could go on news-stands has come up again. I've long thought that our NL really is more of a magazine (NL to me means a couple of pages). However, I don't feel up to coping with a proper magazine, so if it's to happen someone else would have to get involved - though I'd be happy to support (proof-reading, for instance). I've been wondering whether we've missed the boat in publishing an EO Magazine (as opposed to NL) and I think this is worth pursuing further. The idea was raised in some email correspondence on another issue during preparation of this issue for printing, and

sparked off a flurry of enthusiastic comments from several directions. As I feel the NL is the right place for ideas to be discussed, I suggested we should invite members to make comments and suggestions; this was approved, so here you are! The following extracts from emails (from several different EO members) will give you a start:

... I'm still drawn to the idea of ours becoming a magazine that could go out to Smiths etc. but with a separate in-house newsletter too for private 'conversations' and listings of events ...

... I think a magazine sounds like a great idea and just the thing for the major home education organisation to foster ... immediate thoughts are to make it like the trading co. a separate EO subsidiary and to make it commercially viable, a bit like Natural Parent or similar. Would this maybe mean a paid editor/producer? That may be essential to have enough distance from our in-house Newsletter to be bought by all and any home educators and beyond. It needs someone in the know to pick it up and run with it ...

... I believe we could commission plenty of stuff for a magazine format that was to go out to the public as well, from educationists/researchers/neuroscientists (about learning) etc. if we did pursue this. EO has more 'quiet' support amongst some of these folk than we realise perhaps - it could be amazing. AND resource providers could be very keen to help get this going, which shouldn't be a problem as long as we keep tight guidelines such as not advertising pot noodles ...

I wonder if it is feasible to get outside finance for such a glossy mag?...

... I think you would need to find someone who knows about the magazine publishing world to be a production/managing editor; maybe some experienced EO members could be a sort of editorial board with influence/control over the content. I suppose we could sell proper advertising space, too ...

... I think it would be so exciting to talk to people, commission articles, have a platform for demonstrating good practice with LEAs etc. and making training materials available, challenging in an open forum policy and research etc., networking with potential resource providers, interviewing members of the Commons cross party Pluralism in Education group, having features on how to set up a thriving local group with information about how to harness the enthusiasm of local depressed teachers as well as artisans - when you think about it, even though the

mag would be available to all home edders (discount or free for EO members?), as well as the rest of the public, heaps of our own development work could spring from this ...

... We'd need to take care to have research papers properly peer-reviewed ... This could lead to EO being recognised as leading HE experts ...

... I think the minimum would be quarterly so that editions could be labelled 'spring, summer' and so on and at least hook into the seasons ...

... This format i.e. (possibly) paying for a key worker agency to carry out work which is overseen by a group of experienced members, who themselves are working to a brief from the EO open Council meetings is rather good I think ...

... There's obviously a balance to be struck with reasonably prompt reactions to on-going issues and to allow time for considered editorial board comments and proper peer review of research papers. And the shorter the interval, the tighter the publishing schedules will have to be ...

... Preferably free to EO members, but maybe discount would be OK - I think it depends on exactly what the split between "general consumption" and "in-house" will be ...

... Maybe having a magazine out there that is available and accessible, to reach more people so that as many as possible learn more about the options open to their families, and add fuel to the public debate about how best to help children to grow, learn and flourish ...

... Anyway it's good to explore it and something in the newsletter feeling it out sounds good to me but I would hope we would act on results fairly swiftly. I'd like it to be under the EO umbrella but maybe it doesn't need to be?...

Well, what do YOU think?

What I like doing is facilitating the exchange between members, which (as I understand the proposal) would remain with the reduced, in-house newsletter. I've volunteered to collate members' responses to this idea, so drop me a line/email (Headed "GLOSSY MAG" PLEASE, so that I can identify it easily) and I'll have a go at putting it all together for everyone who's contributing to this debate. Please give your name and address - not for publication, just so I know who you are.

~N.B. On this, write to me direct; copy for the NL should be sent to one of the section editors, as usual.

Anne, 12 March 2002

REVIEWS

Barefoot Book of Heroines - Great Women from Many Times and Places

by Rebecca Hazell

This book is about women who have done good things in history, like helping people or making discoveries. There are lovely pictures of the people and things that were happening in their countries when they were alive. There are twelve stories from nine countries: Greece, Japan, France, England, North America, Poland, Russia, China and Mexico. They are from a range of times but most are from quite a long time ago. The people are: Agnodice, Lady Murasaki Shikibu, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Joan of Arc, Queen Elizabeth the First, Sacajawea, Harriet Tubman, Marie Curie, Anna Akhmatova, Madam Sun Yat-Sen, Amelia Earhart and Frida Kahlo Y Rivera. I liked the story about Sacajawea. It is about when white people were being cruel to the native Americans. Sacajawea was a slave captured by the English and owned by the guide to an exploring party known as the Lewis and Clark expedition. She helped the expedition very much and they could not have survived without her amazing skills. There are a lot of statues and monuments to her in America. I liked this book and I think it is really interesting. It is one of a series which have been reviewed in past newsletters. Emma Whitehall (11)

£12.99 ISBN 1 84148 2005 Barefoot Books

Real Victorians Digital Time Traveller Book and CD Rom by Mike Corbishley

Tricia says: "The Real Victorians CD for PC MAC was very good. You could find out facts and explore some Victorian houses (including Down House where Charles Darwin lived) although there are only four to choose from. Most of the games are quite easy, and some are quite hard. My favourite is the treasure hunt, where you have to collect some Victorian animals on a grid map (e.g. - A1, B1, ...) finishing with the prized animal in sixteen moves. The references may not be the most exciting thing in the game, but you can find out things about the Victorians. Last of all, at the end of the game, you can go the Real Victorians website. I've been there and it was really good!" Sue adds: "The book packs a lot of information into its 48 pages and has ideas of things to do (make your own theatre, flicker book or thaumotrope) and print off from the CD (e.g. Christmas cards). Text comes in just the right amounts (for me) and the illustrations are appealing with snippets of information tucked in. The CD was a favourite with Tricia and Thomas (age 6) for quite a while, though the Jigsaw activity soon lost its appeal. The website has links to several other sites, though some are general with a section about Victorians rather than dedicated to the era. On the whole we'd recommend it!"

Tricia O'Neils (9) and Sue O'Neils

£12.99 ISBN 1 902 804 06 6 Tag Learning. Published in association with English Heritage

Thursday's Child

by *Sonya Hartnett*

This was a very thought-provoking read, if a little disturbing. It combines real issues of hardship through the Great Depression with a surreal story line incorporating a child who lives underground. It is written from the perspective of Harper Flute, a young girl. She documents the events surrounding her family's struggle to survive both a controlling landlord and her father's inability to provide effectively for his family during the Great Depression. Among these trials her younger brother, Tin, retreats underground to live in a subterranean world of tunnels. Thursday's Child is about her life, her thoughts and feelings, as she grows up. It is well written, giving a very strong feel for the despair and struggle to survive during the Depression, alongside an excellent story line. This is a very powerful read for an older child, possibly teens upwards. It wouldn't suit everyone however. My daughter could not get into it at all.

Sue White

£4.99 ISBN 0 7445 3996 0 Walker Books

Agent Arthur on the Stormy Seas

by *Martin Oliver*

Agent Arthur is the youngest member of the Action Agency, a 'go anywhere, do anything' service. Arthur and his dog, Sleuth, are sent on a mission to find out why ships keep disappearing. They team up with twins, Jim and Kate, and are soon embroiled in an adventure where they are shipwrecked, become entangled with pirates (female as well as male), meet a ghostly galleon and find buried treasure. On each page the readers need to put themselves in Arthur's shoes and solve a puzzle to further the mission.

Stephanie and Claudia enjoyed this book. They found the puzzles challenging, but not impossible, and the clues, located before the answers at the back of the book, were helpful when they did get stuck. My only complaint is that the secret code symbols could have been printed slightly larger - some of them looked very similar to my eyes (but then I suppose all good secret agents should have their magnifying glasses to hand!). There was plenty of action to keep us all page-turning to the end of the book, wondering what on earth could befall poor Arthur next. This is a fun book that got us all using our brains and seems to me very good value for money.

Vivienne Hughes with Stephanie (9) and Claudia (8)

£2.99 ISBN 0 7460 43155 Usborne

What's the Story? - Games and Activities for Creative Storymaking

by *Steve Bowkett*

'This book looks like fun,' said Stephanie, and she and Claudia went on to spend great chunks of time working with the ideas given. Clearly, the layout of the book is attractive and appealing, consisting of a series of photocopiable worksheets. These cover the four key elements of storymaking - characters, settings, plots and atmospheres, and were very helpful in generating

all sorts of ideas. The activities in each chapter become progressively more challenging, but the book is very flexible in that all the pages are stand-alone or can be linked with other activities, so we just chose the ones that seemed most interesting, and moved on to the next stage of storymaking when we felt ready. The worksheets seemed to follow on naturally from the fantasy games that children constantly play, but this time we were getting the characters down on paper in pictures and words, and developing them in various situations and thinking hard about their reactions.

The book was devised by a writer for use by years 3 to 6 to support the Literacy Hour. His sense of fun and enjoyment of storymaking shine through - this is a huge improvement on any English book I had while at school!

Vivienne Hughes with Stephanie (9) and Claudia (8)

£12.99 ISBN 0 7136 54201 A & C Black

Atlantis- the Legend of a Lost City

by *Christina Balit*

A beautiful re-telling of the Atlantis story with great pictures that reflect the unreal quality of the legend. This is a wonderful book for reading out loud and enjoyed by Amber over and over again. It has most definitely fuelled her imagination, as some beautiful artwork has been created as a result. I recommend this book for children of 4+

Caroline Farquar with Amber (4)

£10.99 ISBN 0 7112 164 9 Francis Lincoln

Spark Files by Terry Deary and Barbara Allen

This series got a really mixed response from our team of reviewers!

Light and Wrong is about some UFO sightings in Duckpool. The Spark family have to sort it out. What makes it even trickier is the fact that nobody actually saw the real UFO. My favourite character is the real alien Bluto who can change into anything as long as it's ball shaped. I think this book is good because it's got an interesting story combined with lots of science experiments.

Kit Freisleben (8)

Dog Run - is about two girls who listen to the radio and it says that their dog is a dangerous dog. I think it is a good book because it's got experiments in it. We have not done any yet. It is very funny when the dad does an experiment in the bin. I think it's one of the best books I have and I would like to read others in the series.

Jem Freisleben (7)

Chop and Change is a 'MAKE learning fun' type of book. It contains 14 'fun' experiments concerned with changing materials, mingled in with a daft story about the Spark family. After listening to half the story Hazel said "Can you just read out the experiments, this story is silly". The experiments included - making soap bubbles; playing catch with wet and dry soap; freezing water; secret messages with lemon juice. They were very basic and everyday - there was only one that was new to us - showing how washing powder can eat an egg. The Spark family are a big cliché -

bossy big sister, 'dumb' annoying younger brother, Baby (referred to only as Baby Spark or 'it'), Granny Spark who is constantly talking about the hardships of life when she was young.

Sally Jarvis with Hazel (9)

Shock Tactics is a fictional book with experiments and teaching in it. It is about Simon, Sam and Granny Spark and Cedric. There is at least one picture on each double page. Simon and Sam Spark run a club called the Internuts, but when a mysterious stranger is spotted in school they turn detectives and they find out by using a lie detector that Mr McBeth is actually a fake head teacher. There are lots of experiments in this book, some of which are: sticky balloons, static electricity, separating salt and pepper, making a circuit, making a switch, oxygen, a burglar alarm, a telegraph and a buzzing treasure chest. Also how to make your own lie detector, a conductor and send morse code. I enjoyed this book and would like to read the others in the series.

Molly Whitehall (8)

Space Race was an excellent book to work through together. The story line was excellent, and provided some good chuckles. Equally appropriate for those just starting supervised science, and those wanting to start exploring for themselves. The experiments which were an integral part of the story line were simple, and fun, although not all worked, and some expectations of what the reader has lying around the house were not always realistic (1 pair of thick lensed glasses, 1 pair of thin lensed glasses, or a house brick, for instance). Another minor quibble was that the co-author (a teacher) did rather over-emphasise the 'school' aspects, so if your child is put off by constant praise of, and mention of, school, this is not for them! Oliver says he would like to do the experiments again (when we've seen an optician, and been to a building site.....), but doesn't want to read the story again because there's too much school!

Garry Humphreys with Oliver (7)

£3.99 each. Faber & Faber

The Wildworld Series; Blue Whale, Wolves, Grizzly Bears, Dolphins and Pandas

I found these books very informative and enjoyable to read. The front covers say 'All you need to know about'. And this is true. The books contain facts about the animals, from birth to death, their habitats, the problems they are facing and what we can do to help them. The books give useful addresses of people to contact if you want to help the particular animal. There are lots of very good pictures and the only one I didn't like was of the wolves killing their prey. I think that children from the age of about 9/10 would really enjoy these books and find them very helpful with their studies. There is so much information contained in them that they would be interesting to adults!

Francesca Houghton (12)

£5.99 each A & C Black

How to Survive Summer Camp

by Jacqueline Wilson

Stella hates the idea of going to summer camp but her Uncle Bill says she will love it - as if! Her mum and Uncle Bill have to go on their honeymoon. She thinks that she is going to hate camp, but is she right? This book is about the adventures Stella has at summer camp with her friend Marzipan and her enemies Louise and Karen, and a strange noise that leads her to keep a very big secret. I like Jacqueline Wilson's books because they are written from the girl's point of view, they are funny and it always leads to a big surprise at the end. I have met Jacqueline while she was signing her books and she said she might write a book about a home educated child one day!

Nina Kouzarides (9)

All Because of Jackson by Dick King Smith

There is a baby rabbit called Jackson. He lives in a burrow on a cliff. He sees the ships going by and he wants to be a sailor. His mum says it is a silly idea. Jackson thinks about it and runs away to sea with his friend Bunny. The story is about their adventures on their way to Australia and what happens when they get there and there are other rabbits there. The story is very funny. I could read it myself. I liked the pictures. My mummy liked it too. I think any of my friends would like it.

Rachel Dunn (5)

ISBN 0 552 52821 8 Young Corgi

The Strange Change of Flora Young

by Nick Warburton

I enjoyed this book so much I read it in two evenings. This is a humorous story about a girl called Flora Young who goes into a stock cupboard in her school and finds an old mask. Her teacher, Mrs Cramp, tells her she could be in the school play using the mask. Flora finds out that the mask has a changing charm on it from a coded piece of paper that came with the mask, which when worn by two people their personalities swap over for two days. In rehearsal Flora puts on the mask, and then Mrs Cramp puts it on. Suddenly Flora becomes Mrs Cramp and she acts like an adult. But Mrs Cramp becomes Flora and can't control her class. Lots of interesting things happen to them throughout the book. I enjoyed this story very much and I thought it was funny in some parts. Some phrases in the story gave it a twist. I recommend this book for girls and boys between 8 and 12 years.

James Baker (10)

£4.99 ISBN 0 7445 5964 2 Walker Books

Imagination Express -

Destination: Castle CD Rom

The programme is aimed at 6-12 year olds, and seeks to help children design their own story books around the theme of 'castles'. It has a 'fact book' which tells you about the characters, creatures, implements and buildings that you can use, and also features children

suggesting ideas for the basis of the story. It is not just about writing either, each page can have an animated sequence designed within it, and music and sounds added. This was a very positive learning experience. An excellent programme for encouraging the imagination. Oliver liked the fact he could tell the stories his own way, and the programme didn't correct him, (basically it felt like fun, not learning English). It does aid the development of creative writing skills, and for children apprehensive about their writing, this makes an excellent tool. My one disappointment was the American spelling throughout. To me, a plow will always be a plough!

Gill Humphreys with Oliver (7)

£12.99 *The Learning Company*

Natural Learning and the Natural Curriculum by Roland Meighan

I was drawn to this book by the ray of hope embodied in its title. Being a home educating parent of a 15 year old, I have, for at least 15 years, had severe misgivings about the whole GSC/GCSE/A Level model of education, regardless of any 'natural curriculum' and hoped that this book would give solid grounding to alternative pathways to a fulfilled life. This book is a compilation of the author's regular 'Natural Parent' columns and does much to re-confirm my own doubts, but unfortunately due to the thinness of this volume and its format, is more of a thought provoker than a practical guide. It is possible that readers will be able to put more body onto the concept of natural learning and its accomplishment by taking up some of the many references in this book, thus enabling parents and other educators to respect each individual's 'natural curriculum' and this book may be a starting point. Disturbing reading that invites further in-depth investigation, discussion and argument by those concerned with freedom and the rights of the individual.

Keith Howarth

£10 1 900219 19 0 *Educational Heretics Press*

Beowulf: Dragonslayer

Adapted by Rosemary Sutcliff

Apart from The Bible, Beowulf is the oldest known written story. It was written in the eighth century and tells a story of battles, bravery, and death. Beowulf is a young fighter who can kill any beast with his sword. One night a sea captain tells a story about a night-stalker. Beowulf asks permission from Hygelac (the king) to go to the Danish shores to kill the night-stalker. He has permission. Beowulf and his fourteen companions travel to the Danish shore the following day and visit the king of that country who is called Hrothgar. Beowulf and his companions sleep at the castle. In the middle of the night Beowulf is awoken by a strange sound, and finds the night-stalker killing one of his companions so he battles with Grendel, the night-stalker, and kills him. Beowulf hangs up the torn-off arm of Grendel on the side of the palace. This

seems as if this could be the end of the story but it is not. Beowulf encounters Grendel's mother the Sea-Hag and a Fire-Drake. This story goes through the whole of Beowulf's life right up to the end of his life. I think this was a very good story. It was hard to understand in some bits but I enjoyed it. After I read this story I made some Lego models of Beowulf and acted out the story.

I think this book would be suitable for anyone age 11+ (especially boys).

Simon Hoggarth (13)

£4.99 ISBN 0-09-941713-8 *Red Fox Classic*

Maisie, the Girl Who Lost Her Head

by Gyles Brandreth

This book is about a girl named Maisie who lived on a boat called *Noah's Arc* which was yellow, red and green. On Coronation Day there is an accident and Maisie's parents die. She meets up with a magician called 'the great Zapristle' whose favourite trick is chopping people's heads off. This is the story of her adventures. It is for 7 - 11 year olds. I read this story because my best friend is called Maisie and the story is good as well.

Rebecca Townley (8)

The Scarecrow's Hat by Ken Bown

A re-assuring storyline about exchanges. It is simple but effective with lovely illustration. Great. Celeste says, "This book is about a chicken, a badger, a duck and a donkey. It is lovely. The animals swap and share and help each other. The pictures are beautiful."

Kirsten Freisleben with Celeste (3)

£4.99 ISBN 1 84270 101 0 *Andersen Press*

What's Cooking Jamelia? by Niki Daly

It is Christmas in South Africa and Jamelia's mum buys a chicken to fatten up for Christmas dinner. The chicken becomes Jamelia's friend, and you can probably guess the rest This book depicts some really strong characters who absolutely come alive with the excellent illustrations. Nicki Daly manages to capture the movement and excitement of the story superbly. With some vivid insights into their everyday lives this is a great way to learn of a different culture, especially within the parallel of a familiar festival. A well written, endearing story with beautiful pictures and loved by our children.

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

£10.99 ISBN 07112 164 9 *Francis Lincoln*

Ants In My Pants by Wendy Mould

Jacob really doesn't want to get dressed to go shopping but his mother insists and hands him his pants. "Then Jacob began to smile I can't, there are ants in my pants" which he and the cat can see but his mother can't. Each item of clothing has an appropriately rhyming animal in it, which Jacob finds very amusing, but his mother not at all. We all loved it. Ceri and Gwenan loved guessing the animal to rhyme with the

item of clothing and would make up their own. Lovely illustrations too, well recommended for 4 – 7 year olds. Susan Bain with Ceri (4) and Gwenan (7)
£9.99 ISBN 0 86264 997 8 Andersen Press

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart by Yann Walcker
This small, illustrated book/CD set is one of a series that includes Beethoven, Chopin, Mozart, Purcell and Schubert, with more following this year. Hazel thought it 'quite good'. The book has 11 double-page spreads that correspond to tracks on the CD. The first seven give a brief outline of Mozart up to age 17. The other 4 demonstrate different styles of composition – chamber, large orchestra, opera and requiem. There are plenty of illustrations that include prints/details from original paintings, photos and some Quentin-Blake style drawings.
Sally Jarvis with Hazel (9)
£9.99 ISBN 1 85103 311 4 ABRSM Publishing

The Genius of Play. Celebrating the Spirit of Childhood by Sally Jenkinson
I was really looking forward to reading this book as I am very interested in all aspects of play and my children are strong advocates of play in practice, as that's what they like to do most of the time. However, I was quite disappointed and I found it difficult to maintain my interest, mainly because the book seemed to be aimed at a more academic audience who may specialise in this subject. It is crammed full of footnotes and references to other experts who are concerned about play. I found this interrupted the flow of the text and therefore it came over as an academic discussion about play rather than a general overview of the subject. On a more positive note I found the chapter about the influence of manufactured toys very interesting, which then went on further to discuss the whole commercial and media circus children and parents are sucked into. The main thing I did get from this book was that play should be recognised as a central activity to childhood. It is something that is being denied more and more to children, especially those who attend school, as play doesn't feature in the national curriculum. I find the subject of play quite fascinating even though I didn't get along too well with this book. There is an extensive bibliography, that will be very useful for further reading and the appendix has some useful suggestions on how to break free from TV.
Eileen Steenman-Clark
£11.99 ISBN 1-903458-04-8 Hawthorn Press

Zoombinis Mountain Rescue CD ROM This is another superb CD-ROM from The Learning Company. The Zoombinis are friendly creatures who need to rescue some of their friends who are trapped in Boolie territory. The player leads the Zoombinis over rivers, valleys and mountains playing maths and logic games along the way. There are three levels of difficulty and in practice mode you can try any activity at any level. A

certain amount of adult help may be needed at the beginning to read the introduction of the story and some of the instructions. Although recommended for 7 years and up, Anthea is just able to do some of the games. At the same time I can see that there is enough in this package for older children to enjoy.
Clare Crane with Natasha (7) and Anthea (5)
£19.99 The Learning Company

Little Monsters CD-ROMS
Tell-Tale Tallulah (Literacy 5-6)
Forgetful Fiona (Numeracy 6-7)
Thomas says: "At first I didn't like *Forgetful Fiona* CD, but once I tried it, it was really good. It is a bit hard, but I will learn more about it later on, maybe next year. The same was for *Tell Tale Tallulah*, I judged it before I tried it. It's very good and helps you with English for 5 - 6 year olds. *Forgetful Fiona* CD is a maths CD for ages 6 - 7. Fiona is very forgetful, and needs to remember something important. *Tell Tale Tallulah* wants to know who has been leaving their belongings lying around. I enjoyed playing both of them." Sue adds: "The skills needed range quite a bit, some activities being fairly easy and others relatively hard (in my opinion). Thomas particularly liked the game about telling the time and adding numbers to make 20; Tallulah demonstrated that Thomas can read words I didn't know he could, so it was useful for us! Although Thomas began by saying he didn't like Little Monsters he liked using the CDs so much he now wants to watch the TV programmes."
Thomas Onions (6) and Sue Onions

Boisterous Billy in Boing! Crash! Rrrrrmph!
The basis of the CD is to take Billy through a week without him becoming boisterous. To achieve this the player has to tackle various literacy activities. The CD states for ages 5-7, and we thought it would best suit the lower end of that age scale. The gameplay is sharp, and fun, but once a week is gone through becomes repetitive rather quickly, although the 'literacy' element is different each time, the story/ graphics remain the same. Oliver says Billy is 'crazy', and he enjoyed making him boisterous, (NOT the aim of the game), the puzzles he found 'easy'. My personal gripe was the sexual stereotyping, (boys are stupid and boisterous, girls are shy and bright), but on a plus side there had been some thought given to the variety of British accents in the game. Gill Humphries with Oliver (7)
£9.99 each Ransom

Developing Literacy - Poetry - Year R
Reading and Writing Activities for the Literacy Hour
This is basically a photocopiable activity book with over 40 worksheets. The activities are of four kinds: action poems; question and answer poems; counting and alphabet poems; repetition and choruses and word play. These are intended to encourage the child to develop their enjoyment of familiar and new rhymes,

jingles, verses and poems, and think about the way in which words are used. Some activities provide frameworks for the child to make up their own poems. The activities went down really well with Hamzah and I found that he really had to think for some of the harder activities. This book is excellent. It is expensive, so it may be worth having a look to see what else is on the market for parents and children as this book is intended as a teacher's resource.

Aalyah Naqvi with Hamzah (3)

£12.99 ISBN 0 7136 5866 5 A & C Black

Jigsaw Safari by Anne Sharp

This book is all about the animals that live in Africa and it is even more special because it has six real jigsaws to do on every page. The facts about the animals are very interesting. The jigsaws are very easy to do (24 pieces each) but I liked doing them because the jigsaw pictures are so very beautiful and really bright colours. I really like this book. Keith Hall (8)

£9.99 ISBN 0 333 4918 8 Macmillan

Bear's Eggs by Ingrid and Dieter Schubert

When Bear happens to be on his way to the lake one day, he discovers three eggs. With the help of his friend, Hedgehog, Bear helps hatch them. Before long, he is a father to three goslings and finds he has to do what any mother goose does... teaching his young to swim, fish, and to fly! Beautifully illustrated and well written, this is a story book to read aloud and share with the younger ones. Aalyah Naqvi with Hamzah (3)

£4.99 ISBN 1 84270 082 0 Andersen Press

Hill of Darkness by Jan Michael

This is an interesting adventure of two young English children living the Seychelles. The author herself spent much of her childhood in the Seychelles so the book has accurate descriptions; I found it extremely interesting to be able to feel as if I, as a reader, had visited the Seychelles. The story itself focuses upon one of the children who believes that a strange spirit man lives on *The Hill*. Local folklor states that he makes candles out children's fat. We enjoyed reading the book especially the factual descriptions about the islands and island habitat. Jo Borthem with Amie

£4.99 ISBN 0571 174086 Faber & Faber

Northern Lights by Philip Pullman

This is the first book of the 'Dark Materials' trilogy. Lyra thinks she is a normal girl, although she lives in a college and is taught by scholars. Then her friend Roger goes missing. Lyra and her Daemon Pantalaimon decide to go north and find Roger. As the story progresses Lyra has many adventures with armoured bears, Tartars and doctors who are doing terrible things in Bolvangar. Towards the end of the book she decides to enter the other worlds. I thought this book was exciting all the way through and would be best for people aged 10+. Stephen Wood (10)

ISBN 0 390 66054 3

Early Reading Direct

As parents who educate three children at home, we have recently come across a scheme written by two experienced infant teachers which is aimed at helping parents successfully teach first reading skills at home. Since starting this scheme Adeline (5) has made excellent progress and enjoys learning to read. The worksheets are predictable which has given her confidence as she can guess what she needs to do next and enjoys *telling me* what we have to do! The programme is easy to follow and allows you the freedom to work at a pace that's right for your child. Individual letter sounds are introduced through rhymes, actions and activities; the child then learns to use these sounds to build words and so read simple stories. Although we have bought many similar types of workbooks individually, it is still usually left to us to us them in some sort of order ensuring that she is not trying to read words containing sounds that she has not covered, this pack does this for us. I've been so pleased with the way the programme has worked that I'm sure that it would be of benefit to other parents who are also teaching their children at home and just starting or for older children who are reluctant readers. Tammy Irwin

For more information tel 01425 615019 or visit www.earlyreadingdirect.co.uk

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 book shop.

CONTACTS

A & C Black 01480 212666

ABRSM 01264 772269 www.ragged-bears.co.uk

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www.andersenpress.co.uk

Barefoot Books 0870 241 5031

www.barefootbooks.com

Educational Heretics Press 0115 925 7261

www.gn.apc.org/edheretics

Faber & Faber 020 7465 7573

Frances Lincoln 020 7284 4009

Hawthorn Press 01453 757040

www.hawthornpress.com

Macmillan Children's Books 020 7014 6000

www.panmacmillan.com

Ransom Publishing 01491 613 711

www.rausom.co.uk

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Tag Learning 01474 537 886

The Learning Company 01293 651 710

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Usborne 020 7430 2800 www.usborne.com

Walker Books 01256 302692

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

SPECIAL SECTION: Educational Philosophy III

I was pleased to have so many responses. Unfortunately we could not print them all, a small matter of red tape I'm afraid. Unless a contributor gives their name we cannot print their letter or article. If a person wants to remain anonymous we will respect their wish but they must give their name and address **to the editor**. I was very sad not to be able to print all the articles I received as they would have been interesting and informative; if anyone wants to send their article again, including their name and address, we hope to be able to include it in the next issue of the newsletter.

One thing that I would say is, no matter how hard it may appear at times, home educating your own children is always worth the effort. Sometimes we may think it is impossible to do our own thing and home educate - think again: where there's a will there's a way. Try to think in a different way, open your mind to enable you to do what was previously thought to be impossible. Most important of all, try not to be judgmental. Do not think that just because someone home educates in a different way or has the 'wrong' coloured hair, wears the 'wrong' sort of clothes, does the 'wrong' kind of job, lives in the 'wrong' area, is too loud or has too many piercings, that they are not the sort of person you want to mix with. Even we so-called 'educated people' have been known to get it wrong. The fact that we are all home educating should be enough of a common factor to enable us all to get on with each other. Most often we just have to forget our prejudices and enjoy spending time with other home educating families.

Television (a bone of contention I know) has been quite enlightening recently, starting with the Witness programme called *'We don't go to school'*. This featured a selection of families, all home educating. The father of one family impressed me when he said 'I would like my children to be equipped emotionally and spiritually to be themselves, if they are able to be that they will be able to do whatever they want to do.' That sums it up for me: a child or young adult who is able to cope in the outside world is all anyone should hope for, success will follow. I know that many E.O.ers saw the programme as portraying only white, middle class families. Those of us who are not white middle class families living so called 'privileged lives' know that home education is not about money or 'class', it is about loving your own children and wanting the best for them, giving them an all-round education and preparing them for their future. Achieving all this on a budget is a learning process on its own!

Then there was a programme about Jackie Stewart - if anyone does not know, he raced Formula One cars in the 60s and 70s. Anyway, he hated school, it was a mental torture he said, he learned probably very little whilst there and left aged 15. It later turned out that he was Dyslexic. He is now one of Scotland's rich and famous sons; proving, yet again, that academic success is not necessary for success in life. So many of our successful business men and entertainers, sports people, comedians, actors, dancers and others I cannot think of right now, are people who for one reason or another failed to thrive whilst at school. These people are now either rich or famous or both, they have succeeded in an area which they personally have chosen to concentrate on. This all sounds like what I see as autonomous education - choose what you want to do and do that to the best of your ability. Success for me is the ability to live life and to do whatever you have chosen to do as well as you can do it; that will lead to true happiness and you will be seen as successful by yourself and others.

Anyway, enough of me and my views, here are the views of other E.O.ers.

Jo Borthen

email jo4eo@aol.com

Articles on structured or informal education always interest me. I'd like to contribute to the conversation in the EO journal, simply because what we are doing seems a little different from those I've read to date.

The kind of structure we use would seem ghastly to many home educators. My son left school at 4 and a half, having done two terms of Montessori, enjoying some aspects (the elements of choice as to how you spent your time) and detesting others (such as group games). He is now almost 12 and has been home educated throughout.

We began, when he was 4, with two hours four mornings a week. We made an arrangement, that he had my 100 per cent attention for this time, and he gave me time to myself in the afternoon so that I could work. The rest of the day we shared in that half attentive busy way that is normal when you live with someone. In the beginning the time was spent reading together, basic maths, and the like. Slowly over the years, we have built up the time, so that now, at 11 years old, he does 5 hours a day, 5 days a week.

The range of subjects has grown, and last term he was doing English, Latin, history, geography, chemistry, physics, art. He is also taking maths and biology GCSE (with the NEC) this May/June, does Spanish and a GNVQ in ICT at the local secondary school through after-school clubs. It's a busy schedule, with at least two subjects each day, using different levels of structure, some curriculum books and some freestyle.

At least half of this 25 hours he does without me now.

Why do we do it this way?

For his part, he is naturally a reader, an intellectual, a Taurean academic (it's in the genes). He has always constantly sought out intellectual stimulus, and the increase in study time has come about through his own appetite for learning. He'll end a long morning of physics and history by curling up with Simon Schama or Horrible Histories, to fill in gaps and answer further questions. When he was 6 and we were living in Guatemala, he spent the days reading a (very old) Encyclopaedia Britannica, the only English books in the house.

He would love the academic challenge and the logical structures of school. What he doesn't handle is the other children. In class environments his most common complaint is how much time is wasted waiting for children to be quiet and listen to the teacher.

For my part, I work generally from home and can't afford not to work (for my own sanity, as much as anything else). I couldn't find the focus I need without such a clear structure to his educational requirements. There is a mutual respect for time shared and time apart that is created by the timetable we've built up from those early days, looking at the responsibilities we faced as parent and child, and gently learning how we could do this thing best.

So to the folks who have geeks, nerds and boffins for kids, surrounded by HE children who spend their days in very different ways, I offer a smile and a shrug of empathy. The beauty of HE is that we listen to the child's individual needs.

"Pixxie" (*name supplied*)

by email bobcat@nemeton.demon.co.uk

I have been so grateful to read other people's ideas on autonomy and structure because not only do they provoke valuable thought about what we're doing and why, but also they remind me of things that can be so easily overlooked in the busyness of home educating!

As others have done I would like to share some of those thoughts with everyone.

As Jo pointed out it is perhaps important to remember that we do not have to take exclusive paths. Autonomy and structure are not necessarily exclusive of one another. And perhaps a better path to follow initially is the one dictated by the *individual needs of our children* and let autonomy or structure arise out of those!

I also find it helpful to remember the way in which we learn as adults. Probably most of us now learn autonomously - even though we are freed from schools, we are still learning! But whatever that learning is, be it driving the car, a new language, an OU course, understanding our new PC, how to home educate, or cook spag.bol., we have perhaps introduced some self-motivated structure into it to enable us to reach our goal. Even my eight-year-old, building with a new Lego set she's chosen, will occasionally set about doing it step by step from the manual if it's something specific she wants to achieve. *So structure does not cancel out autonomy* as perhaps some people fear!

As most contributors have suggested we can take the lead from our children. But I think it might be helpful to recognise that some children find comfort from clearly defined boundaries. It is not necessarily appropriate that we never *impose* anything upon them, as perhaps some people think autonomy dictates. There is no doubt that some children just need rescuing from themselves! Me included! And sometimes our insistence brings them comfort. Sometimes, some children like to do as they are told! It's easier! Just as some of us adults are very self-motivated and enjoy self-employment, and some of us are not easily self-motivated and enjoy working for others. Everyone is different. Some of us have the need to lead. Some prefer to follow. We have to spot the level of those needs in our children.

There is also the question of experience. Simply because children do not have many years of experience under their belts yet, they cannot make a choice from the *broad perspective* experience brings. For example I do not believe children can make a choice about whether they want to write or not until they are old enough to see beyond their egocentric little worlds. If they get to, say, sixteen and can write and decide never to write again then I believe they're old enough to have seen their relation to the world and the advantages and disadvantages of their decision. But if they've never experienced writing, or reading other's writing, how can they make an informed decision?

The question is: if left completely to their autonomous devices would they ever bother to write? Do they need to be strongly encouraged to write so they have the experience needed to make this decision? Perhaps they'll just do it when the need arises or do we actually need to impose some experiences on our children to help them realise their aims in life?

We all have different viewpoints on this one! But it will be our own individual, experienced, adult beliefs, more than our children's needs, that may have the biggest influence on our decisions about autonomy and structure in this case! I think it's just as

important to bring our own feelings into it – *we have to be comfortable with what we do as well as the children!*

The strongest thought I've had after reading the contributions is one of *value*. If we constantly assess the value of what we ask our children to do – or what they choose to do – I believe we can't go far wrong. If we ask: what value is there in me making them do this? What are they getting out of these workbooks? What are they getting out of watching schools TV? What are they getting out of writing the essay or pages of sums? What are they getting out of the activities a school orientated society would call educational? Honestly – what good is it?

And what are our priorities and objectives? Self-fulfilled adults? Self-motivated young people? Happy people? Masses of exam passes to make *us* feel good? Skills to make masses of money? Children who are happy *now* never mind the future? A combination of all? What's important here?

Only you and your children can answer that one! But it will be asking those questions, and understanding our children, that assists us in finding the right path. *Different for everyone* as so many have said, but that's easy to forget in this culture of compete and compare, keep up or be damned! I like to think maybe home educators are developing a different culture!

Those are my thoughts, I hope someone gets something out of them. I've certainly enjoyed reading others.

Oh – and as a parting shot, there's always that other quote to remember:

Paralysis by analysis! Perhaps we think too much! Let's also remember to make time, for ourselves and for our children, to stop analysing and just *be*.

Ross Mountney, Rose Cottage, Sea Lane, Old Leake, Boston, Lincs. PE22.9JJ

I came across your article again today while browsing through the E.O mag again!!! I was prompted to respond.

We took Richard out of school last May, he is 15 in June so he had a long time in school. Over the past months I have turned over in my mind so many different ways of educating Richard, really wanting him to be self-led but being conditioned to formal education. I could not let go - until now that is.

After reading the letters on autonomous learning, all I kept thinking was I agree with everything that was being said. At school Richard hated music he now wants to play an electric guitar! He has written some wonderful songs and loves all types of music from the Beatles to Enya.

My son is a different boy now and he wants to go into the music business. So thank you all for writing the articles, we can both now relax and enjoy our lives learning together.

Pat O'Leary, Rochester, Kent

A little bit of this & a little bit of that!

Most of us have opted for home-education because we have rejected the 'one-size-fits-all' ethos of state controlled schools and the national curriculum, so surely we can agree that there isn't a 'right' or 'wrong' way to facilitate learning for our children?

Autonomous learning will work like a dream for some, while others will be happier with some structure or sense of order. As diverse individuals a diversity of approach is necessary and desirable – the very thing that schools do not embrace.

I suspect that autonomous learning works best for children fortunate enough never to have suffered from 'schooling'. My son left the system aged 12 (6 months ago); we both enjoyed a 'honeymoon' period while he 'de-schooled' and healed from various traumas, but he now needs to be set tasks and projects as, left to his own devices, he drifts into boredom or endless computer games.

He enjoys his 'homework', and this is what is important – what makes him happy. Also, and this is the case with us, some (older) children have to be left for chunks of the day while their parent(s) go to work or meet other commitments, and having a project to work on makes the time pass faster.

My son has also decided that he would like to try to get some exam passes as he will need to earn a crust in the not-too-distant future and does not particularly fancy the prospect of serving fries in Burger King. Some home-educated children may not have to worry too much in the future about paying the gas bill, but many of them will!

It is easy to get carried away by the idyllic notion of children learning through play and exploring their environment, but many families live in less than ideal environments – in small houses or flats, with little or no gardens and no fast access to the open countryside; also who cannot afford PCs or 'fees' to pay for extras such as drama and music lessons.

These issues are not the most important however – what is important is that we all want the best for our children whatever our circumstances. We need to stop getting caught up in what's 'right' or 'less right', and get on with supporting each other in our common aims and sharing our resources.

Benita Cumming, Exeter.

This final article, I feel, is essential reading for all parents (and Grandparents). Read and enjoy.

PARENTS – TRUST YOUR CHILDREN. LET THEM BE.

Alternative title – “Am I doing the right thing?”

Home-education - the great escape

So, you've decided to home-educate your children, you're thinking about doing it, or just interested in the subject. I won't go into numerous reasons why I think/know it is the right decision for the majority of children, but most parents making this large step on the journey of life have many doubts about this route. After all, if most parents still decide to send their

children to school, surely it must be the best option around, isn't it? NO! There are many aspects of modern life where just because the majority of people do it, it doesn't mean it is right or the best option. Hopefully I can open up some minds and show them that opting for this minority (at present) style of education (I prefer to call it 'living') benefits our children, families, lifestyle and, ultimately, society as a whole.

This article is an amalgamation of thoughts and opinions that I've accumulated over the years, partly as a result of my own experiences as a home-educating father, but also from questions I am regularly asked in the street, in the local shop, in the library, on the telephone, by family, work colleagues, etc. I have often been asked "How do I...?", "What about...?", "I'm worried about...", "Is it true that...?" with respect to home-educating. I quite enjoy answering these questions, 'spreading the gospel' and hopefully at the same time enlighten and 'educate' whoever I am talking to.

Stop Worrying!

I know it's easier to say it than do it, but **don't worry!** You've made a decision which is...

- * Natural (in the eyes of those who think that forcing children to go to school and/or study subjects against their will is wrong).
- * Brave (in the eyes of those who would like to do it but haven't got the courage or support to do so).
- * Negligent (in the eyes of those who think that children can only get an education at school).
- * Ill-advised (in the eyes of the government, LEAs and most teachers).
- * Mad (in the eyes of those parents who can't wait to "get the children out from under their feet").
- * Wonderful (in the eyes of all those who know it works and/or have been through it themselves).
- * Understandable (in the eyes of those who realise that the current institutionalised school system is falling apart, doesn't work and has to be changed drastically).

So what are you worried about when it comes to home-educating your children?

That they will not study hard/long enough?

That they will not cover the subjects **you** think they should?

That your child will lounge around in bed all day or watch TV for hours?

They will have too much freedom in their lives?

They are not going to get enough qualifications?

They won't get the chance to go to college or university?

They will have problems finding a 'good job' when they're older?

They won't get the education that you never had (or wasted) the chance to get?

They won't get on socially in the 'big-wide-world' when they are adults?

I will attempt to address some of these doubts, and hopefully allay some of those fears, apprehensions and reservations.

"How will my child pass exams if they don't go to school?"

Let's take one step back and consider why this question is being asked in the first place. What are exams, what are they for, and most importantly, what use do they have?

Exams show that someone had enough knowledge of a particular subject on a particular day to satisfy an examiner. Maybe the student was lucky and the right questions came up. Any other day they could easily have failed. Does that prove that the student knew their subject?

Of course it doesn't. Say the student has a photographic memory, or is good at cramming three days beforehand and forgets most of what they've learned within a few weeks (like most of us would). Do they really know the subject? No. What about the student who **really** knows their subject but has exam nerves, was ill on the day, or concentrated on the wrong areas? They will be deemed failures when they are obviously not. So what do exams prove? Nothing. They are a convenient and divisive way of providing 'success' statistics for government, local education authorities, OFSTED, schools, teachers - but least of all, the student. Their main aim is to justify the (lack of) progress of the mainstream education system in this country.

So why are we 'measuring' children at all in this way? What gives adults the right to put children through such an ordeal, usually against their will?

If someone (child or adult) wishes to be tested, that's fine, and even then it would only be if they were confident of passing, or genuinely wanted to find out what they don't know about a subject. Unfortunately for most children in this country, they have to take exams at a fixed time in their life, whether they are ready or not, and are branded as failures or 'low-achievers' if they don't reach a certain standard in an exam that they haven't themselves chosen to sit in the first place! It may sound strong, but in other aspects of life this could be seen as an abuse of human rights! It wouldn't be tolerated by adults, so why inflict it on children? How would we feel if we were expected to have a detailed knowledge of ten subjects and be tested on all of them within a three-week period (in June, of all the months to be stuck inside an examination room!).

You may be now be thinking "OK, so if exams aren't the answer, how do you measure a child's knowledge of a particular subject?" Why is this measurement necessary at all? To justify the positions of those employed within the education system?

"But surely they need exam passes if they are going to do well in life?"

Most adults claim that exam results are the passport to a successful life. As long as our society places more importance on GCSE and A-level passes than real skills which are of use in the real world, that will remain the case, but look at the harm this attitude doing to our young people meanwhile, and the pressure they are being subject to. What good is it doing? The system is geared towards testing, more testing, exams and more exams. Crazy!

It's **SKILLS** that make the world go round, not pieces of paper saying you have 4 GCSEs at grade C. There are (and probably always will be) potential employers and places of further education which insist on paper qualifications, but the balance is changing and in many places skills and experiences are now being recognised just as much as exam passes.

If a child of (e.g.) 13 is more interested in motors and engines than any lesson they are 'fed' at school, why can't it be arranged so that (s)he pursues that interest in a garage as an apprentice mechanic? They wouldn't 'get in the way' (a horrible phrase used by adults who don't enjoy the company of young people), they could just observe, or get some practical experience stripping-down a disused engine, and even get paid if they were productive towards the business.

If a child really loves art or music they could be out in the real world learning about script-writing, back-stage electronics or how to make guitars. It's never too young to start if the child is interested, but can they do it within the current schooling system and its extremely narrow (and boring) National Curriculum?

Either way, the experience gained is far more valuable than any exam certificate.

Too little thought is given to the question "Are we preparing our children to be motivated, responsible, happy and looking forward to a life which **they** are in control of, and not ending up in a low-paid, dead-end job which they hate, but are doing just to 'pay the bills'?" Our children deserve better than that. It may have been more the case in the past that exam passes led to a higher probability of obtaining a 'better job' (whatever that means), but thankfully that attitude is changing now, albeit slowly. Training staff costs money, so once someone has even the most basic of skills that can be built upon, paper qualifications soon become irrelevant.

If you were a potential employer, who would you choose? The applicant with 5 GCSEs and an A level, or the applicant who has done rock-climbing, has taught themselves to speak Spanish, belongs to the local chess club, knows a bit about car mechanics and designs websites for hobby and profit?

If children want to take exams (without coercion from adults - we do **NOT** know better) in the subjects that **THEY** are interested in, let them do it in their own time, when they are ready. Look at the number of people choosing to go to evening classes, college or university later in life. They have a keen attitude towards studying because it is their choice, and children should not be treated any differently. Why the hurry to get so many subjects crammed in before they are 17? Most of them still have 80% of their lives to go!

Many adults acknowledge they learned more about 'real-life' in the five years since leaving school than the 12-14 years they spent at school! It is currently estimated that around 20% of school-leavers at 16 do not have a 'basic grasp of the fundamentals of the English language and mathematics which would be reasonably expected of a person of that age'. Whatever these standards are (and I personally believe there should not be any dividing line in this case - each child is unique) is irrelevant, but if a child has been subject to 15,000 hours of schooling, what has been going on during that time? The school has failed in its legal duty to provide an education for each child in accordance with their age, aptitude and ability. Anyone fancy suing them?

"How do I know it will be worthwhile? What advantages will it give them in their future life?"

Above all, you are giving your children the opportunity to be themselves, make decisions for themselves, learn for themselves, make mistakes for themselves. If an autonomous approach has been followed, and with supporting adults to help make their wishes happen, and to fall back upon if things go wrong, children who haven't been through the school 'conveyor belt' (and hence been moulded as products rather than individuals) will flourish accordingly.

If you are thinking of future education or employment prospects, educational institutes and employers are usually looking for interesting people who they think can complete the course or do the job, not robotic pupils who have been 'fed' all the knowledge they have, forced to learn it parrot-fashion and regurgitate it for an exam, then forget it all.

Because of the more independent and customised type of education that home-educated children have had, they are often more resourceful and entrepreneurial than their school counterparts. Useful fact - the 50 top earners in the UK today have very few formal qualifications between them (Alan Sugar started off with a market stall, Richard Branson started with a van delivering records). They got out there and did what they wanted to do, despite their lack of qualifications.

Non-schooled children often have a confidence and different outlook on life which their schooled counterparts don't have. This partly results from the fact that they have not been

continuously tested to satisfy someone else's agenda, not constantly measured against others, not regarded as backward or below average in any way, been encouraged to follow their interests and have, on the whole, been treated respectfully as regards what they do and don't want to do in life. They see their future as more under their own control than predetermined by others. Life is seen as something to look forward to - not a chore.

Because they haven't been subject to the socialisation restrictions that schoolchildren experience (see elsewhere in this article), and if they have been brought up in a loving and respectful environment in which they are not 'shouted-down' and suppressed by adults, they are not so 'scared' of authority and find it easier to relate to all people, not just those of their own age.

"But if my child is left to determine their own education and timetable, they wouldn't be able to cope. They would sleep 'til midday! And when they did get up, they'd be so lazy. They would play computer games all day!"

Laziness is a term often used to describe the fact that the recipient is not doing what someone thinks they should be doing. Doing 'nothing-in-particular' is an important part of life. Playing games can be beneficial (I have found if you let children regulate themselves, they usually don't spend excessive hours in front of a screen). Sleep is especially important - medical experts suggest most teenagers don't get enough! We can't spend all of our waking hours concentrating, learning, busy, active, etc..

So home-educated children may not be up at 7.30am, so what? They would probably go to bed later as well, so they wouldn't be deprived of sleep. More importantly, they would be waking when their body was ready, not when an alarm clock or shouting parent breaks their peaceful sleep 5 days a week. It's unnatural and we have no right to force this regime on our children when it is not necessary. Our children don't tell us when to get up or when to go to bed, so what gives us the right to tell them? Allowing them to regulate their own body-clock is just one of the many ways in which they can take control over their life.

Most adults know how wonderful it is to have a lie-in at the weekends, that's probably because we've pushed our bodies so much during the week. We would function a lot better if we listened to our bodies more.

"But if they don't get up early, how are they going to cope with a job?"

This shows a 'stuck in the past' mentality, where childhood is controlled by adults and geared towards the end goal of 'getting a job'. Besides, we are moving ever closer towards a 24-hour society, so having to 'get up early' to go to work is becoming less relevant. Sure we all need money, and for most of us this means working for it, but is it right to pressurise our children further by placing yet more expectation upon them? They are not children for long, so why spoil their childhood with the "If you don't study hard, you'll end up on the dole queue" threat?

If our children have vocations in life, following their own interests via their own motivation will be far more likely to lead them there than studying subjects they have no interest in because someone thinks that's where the employment prospects are. If they can earn money from something they are interested in, that's a welcome bonus. 'Getting a good job' should not be the be-all and end-all of life. There is probably not enough conventional employment to go around anyway, so an increasing number of us will have to look around for alternative ways of making a living.

"But left to themselves they would have no structure to their lives. They wouldn't learn anything!"

Because they haven't been restricted by the numerous constraints that school imposes, non-schooled children have a different, often much more positive outlook on life, and are motivated by themselves to take an interest in subjects, activities, etc. to a level which suits themselves, and, because of the time available, often to a higher level than they could ever achieve at school.

Children who have the freedom to set their own agenda and timetable of life are far more likely to do what they think is interesting and relevant to **their** lives. They often have a different concept of what education is and do not see it simply as knowledge that is 'spoon-fed' between the hours of 9am to 3.30pm. It is absorbed by living and experiencing as well as via studying. They have the opportunity of looking forward to all 7 days of the week, not just weekends and holidays.

"What about socialisation? How will my child learn to mix with others if they are at home all day"

Another myth to dispel. Home-educated children are rarely at home all day, every day. Parents who have taken the decision to home educate are usually responsible enough to realise that mixing with others is an important part of a child's development.

Home-educated children have the opportunity of mixing with people of all ages all the time, as opposed to the extremely unnatural environment of spending 6 hours a day with around 30 people of their own age, most of whom they would choose not to be with. Where in the 'real world' does this happen? Because of this age division, someone who may only be a month older may be perceived as being so much larger, older, cleverer, etc., all because they have been graded as a year older. In school, children rarely have the opportunity to mix with someone more than a year older or younger than themselves. Home-educated children are not subjected to this unfair segregation, and generally have fewer problems dealing with people of different ages and a wide range of social situations.

The school playground and classroom culture is not an ideal environment for making meaningful friendships. What with the taunting, bullying, gang culture, etc. that goes on in schools (from adults as well as children), we can do without most of the socialisation that goes on there.

It is also important to remember that children must have the option NOT to socialise if that is their wish. We all sometimes find ourselves in social situations in which we'd rather not be. Children must have the freedom to withdraw from such situations if they feel uncomfortable. It's analogous to forcing someone to eat something they don't want to, or study something they don't want to, or being forced into saying "Thanks for the wonderful present" when it was awful. It is wrong and disrespectful.

Every child is a genius!

This doesn't really come under the heading of a reservation that the potential home-educator may concerned about, but I think it is very important to reassure parents that their children are very special in many ways, and that by taking them out of school (or not sending them in the first place) they are giving their children a much greater opportunity to flourish in whatever area(s) of life they choose.

I believe that every child has the capability of excelling in one or more aspects of life (social, academic, commercial, sport, entertainment, etc.) to a standard which most of us

would regard as outstanding or exceptional. Most of us don't attain this, even if we would like to, and often this is due to the way we were treated at school and by our parents. Due to the way they were brought up, some parents don't have the confidence in their children to believe that they are anything other than 'ordinary', and are destined to be 'nothing special' in life. And so the negative cycle goes on. Thankfully there are also many parents who are determined to ensure that their children do not have the restrictions that they themselves had, and so the cycle is broken and (hopefully) we move towards a better society for all of us.

If a child is good at sport but hates dancing, or loves computers but not maths, music but not art, etc., let them follow what they enjoy to a level they are comfortable with. Pushing and challenging themselves is far more productive than being coerced by well-meaning parents or teachers who think it would be 'for their own good'.

We should help the child who is mad about machines and appears to be interested in nothing else by going to the local second-hand shop, getting an old radio, dismantling it and trying to rebuild it. It doesn't matter what the outcome is, just consider all the skills that may have been picked up during the process! Maths, physics, reading (instructions and manuals), dealing with people (the local electrical retailer for advice, spare parts shops), electronics, learning to use tools, gaining the confidence that comes with the satisfaction one achieves by building something that (hopefully) works and is valued by others, and (eventually) getting rewarded by payment for something that they enjoy doing.

Similarly, a child's love of music could lead them to instrument making (art, craft, design, maths), playing (study, memorising, reading), performing (socialisation), recording, etc..

Any child's loves, however narrow they might seem at first, will usually lead to other skills which could be useful in later life (and if they aren't, so what?). Whatever they decide to do (with support and praise from us) I'm sure that they will eventually get the balance of skills which is right for their lives. The most important thing we as adults can do is to allow them to follow their chosen path.

"If schools are so bad, surely they would have been abolished years ago!"

Most schools today are still loosely based on the way they were in the Victorian times, when the opportunity to learn to read, write, etc. was first made available to all children, not just those from wealthy families. Unless you knew someone particularly knowledgeable in a certain subject, teachers and books were the only way children could learn about life beyond their own family and locality. Today things are totally different. Knowledge can be obtained from so many sources (books, newspapers, radio, television, libraries, internet, etc.) that if one wanted to learn about anything, school is probably the last place one would think of! Teachers are no longer the 'fount of all knowledge' that they were regarded as. Their job now is to control a group of children of differing abilities and interests for around 50 minutes, before passing them on to another teacher to do the same, and so on until the school day comes to an end. If some knowledge is absorbed by the children during that time, that will be a bonus. It is a glorified child-minding service. The vast majority of learning takes place outside of the classroom. Education and knowledge is obtained by attending the longest lesson of all. It's called living.

School fails most children most of the time. They cannot cater for anyone but the 'average' child, who of course does not exist, because all children are unique. In its current structured, institutionalised and inflexible format schools cannot cope with children's individual requirements, interests and abilities. Those with more ability and/or interest in a particular subject are held back by others in the class. Those who find the subject difficult, but are still

interested, may require more individual help, which they can't get. Those who are not at all interested in the subject may disrupt the others, and shouldn't be there in the first place. No-one wins.

Children should not be forced or coerced into attending lessons on subjects they are not interested in - their time would be far better spent doing something they **were** interested in.

I am not suggesting that we abolish schools altogether. There are many children who have such a poor home life (not necessarily financially, but from the point of view of love, respect, stimulation, etc.) that for them to spend a few hours a day away from that environment would probably be beneficial.

I am not suggesting that we knock all schools to the ground. Keep the buildings, open them up to children and adults of all ages, change the name from school to resource or community centre, keep the resources they have, especially those not found in the average home (sports, science, music, art, etc. equipment), change the staff title from teacher to assistant or facilitator, and, above all, let the children take what they want, when they want, from what is on offer. Don't have compulsory attendance or exams, don't have narrow, prescriptive, uninteresting curricula. In other words, give the children a **REAL CHOICE**. If a child wants to do carpentry all day, why shouldn't they? If they just want to go there to meet with their friends - why not? By taking control of their own lives, I'm sure that far more children would enjoy going, and it would not be seen as the 'prison' it has become for so many.

"But isn't home education a huge risk?"

It is only a risk in the same way that any big life decision is a risk. Think how much more you risk to your child's emotional health by placing them in an environment which does not respect their individual needs and stifles their learning abilities and talents. Most parents take great care over selecting child-minders, baby-sitters, nannies, etc., but think nothing of placing their child into the hands of strangers for 200 days a year for 12 years in the hope that they may get an education! And if it goes wrong, they blame the schools and the teachers that they selected and approved of in the first place!

"If home education is as good as you make out, how come more people aren't doing it?"

Why isn't it the norm? I think the main reason is ignorance. The vast majority of parents in this country still do not know that it is legal not to send your children to school, despite the law "Children must be educated, in school or otherwise" having been around since 1944. Even before this, families have been home-educating their children since the beginning of time. If more parents knew about it, I'm sure that more would take up the option, the word of its success would spread and eventually there would be a national acceptance of home education as a common alternative to school. It might then even attract funding from the government (hopefully with no strings attached) who, along with Local Education Authorities and the schools themselves, currently ignore it.

It's strange - we have a state education system in this country that so many people regard as failing, yet there is one obvious solution staring the authorities in the face - the promotion of home education as a viable, valid, and successful alternative! But that would mean admitting failure, which would be very embarrassing considering the promises made by politicians and the huge amount of money being pumped into the system. For every home-educated child at present (in 2001) the government is saving about £2,400 per year. That's a lot of money that could be re-distributed to home-educators in the form of tax rebates or resources which we currently have to pay for ourselves!

Even if parents do know that education doesn't have to take place at school, here are a few reasons why they don't do it...

- * Even if one or both parents are in favour of home education, lack of support (even hostility) from other family members and friends prevent them from taking it further.
- * Economics dictates that both parents may have to work, and childcare may not be available or may be too expensive.
- * They don't know of any home-educating 'success-stories', so they have no idea whether it works or not.
- * They are not too happy about the idea of their children being around them for more hours of the day than they already are!
- * They don't want to be seen as 'odd'. There is a myth that because home-educators are different from the mainstream in one aspect of their lives (i.e. education), then they must be weird, wealthy, and teachers themselves. Nothing could be further from the truth. They span the entire range of backgrounds: financial, political, racial, religious, geographical, educational, and so on. They are normal people from all walks of life, united by the fact that school is not the best option for their children.
- * The "School didn't do me any harm. If was good enough for me, it's good enough for them" attitude.

"Who does this person think he is? Surely I, as a parent, know what's best for my child. What does he know?"

I can hear many readers (if they get this far) saying (maybe shouting) "What an opinionated bigot! Who does this person think they are? I have children in school and they seem perfectly happy. What does (s)he know about my children and their lives?" Well, if it is totally the **child's choice** (non-forced or coerced) to be in school, good luck to you/them and I hope they really are as content as you make out, but if you have sent your child to school, it implies that it is not the child's decision, so how do you know (s)he is really happy?"

What do I know about school? I have lived it, I see it, I read about it, I listen to other parents and children and about their problems with the system. I have enough experience and knowledge of home education to confidently stand by my opinions in this article.

I appreciate that there are differences between state, private and so-called 'free' schools, and that many of my statements are generalisations which (by definition) will not apply to every school, adult, parent or child, but I stand by them in that they apply to the majority. It is the so-called 'normal' society that I would love to see changed, and hopefully we are sowing the seeds of change.

Of course there are well-balanced and happy children who have been through the schooling system, and 'come out the other end' to lead contented lives, but that does not detract from the fact that I believe that more children should (and could) be given the choice as to how their futures are determined. I don't just mean a nod to choice in the form of selecting 4 out of 10 GCSE subjects, I mean the true choice of whether they want to study any subjects at all, whether they go to any place of work or study, whether they go to bed (or wake up) early or late. Those are true choices in life.

I suspect many people reading this article will think (and the people who asked me the questions at the beginning of this article have said) "This is all fine in theory, but I bet it doesn't work in practice." Please believe me - it does. If only more parents would give it a chance.

I don't want to appear patronising, nor force my opinions down other people's throats (that usually has the opposite effect of the aim one is trying to achieve), but if this article makes people think a little more about their children and their future and happiness, it will have served its purpose.

Within the confines that life imposes (time, money, etc.) I try to give my children as much freedom and choice as possible. My children (2 boys, 10 and 15, never been to school) often tell me when they think I'm wrong, and I sometimes think "If they have the confidence to disagree so forcefully when they believe that something is so wrong, then I must have done something right." Life is far from perfect, I make mistakes, I know I can do better, and I'm trying.

Conclusion

Take the plunge! Do it! Thousands have done so successfully. I've yet to meet any ex-school family who said that moving to home education was the wrong decision. There cannot be failures, since there is nothing to fail. The best you can do for your children is to help them to get what they want from life and get where they want to go. Remember, they are real people with real ideas, real aspirations and real experiences. Although they haven't got the same 'experience of life' (whatever that means) that adults claim to have, their views and opinions are just as valid and adults have no right to trample all over those decisions just because they are adults. Older does not mean wiser - look at all the problems in your street, locality, country and the world. How many of them are caused by children?

Wherever they are going in life, let's help on their way, not get in their way. We need to let them go, observe, listen, help and guide when asked. The future of children's happiness, self-confidence and life-fulfilment is in their hands, but only if we, the parents, trust it to happen.

Thanks for listening.

Alan Harris-Reid

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Thank you to everyone who has responded to this and the previous two special sections. It has been very interesting 'work' putting them together. I hope others will be prepared to give a little time and energy to putting together a special section - it is interesting, puts you in touch with people you would otherwise not know and it is not difficult; it is also essential if the Newsletter is to remain interesting (and sometimes controversial) reading. If I can do it you can - after all, in school I was an academic failure. Contact Anne Rix, the Newsletter co-ordinator, or get in touch with me: Jo Borthen, 57 Florida Drive, Exeter, EX4 5EX Devon. Tel. 01392 679499 Email: jo4eo@aol.com

P.S. THANK YOU FOR READING THESE ARTICLES. JO.

Topic for next Special Section: *"What does home education mean to you? How have your lives changed since embarking on home education? What changes have you made to your lives? How have your beliefs evolved in the process?"* Send your contributions to Linda Cutler (details inside front cover)

SCOTLAND: draft Guidance

Heads Down!

The deadline for the responses for the Scottish Executive is rapidly approaching (March 29) and so it is 'blood sweat and tears' time as everyone who has not done so already 'puts the head down' to produce a response to the draft guidance for education authorities on home education.

Since Christmas there has been considerable discussion among home educators around the guidance. This and the responses so far show, not surprisingly, that home educators are more or less of a mind regarding what's wrong with the contents of the guidance. Some excellent responses from EO members have been returned.

EO's team is in full swing at the time of writing (early March) and we are preparing a detailed section by section response to the guidance. It was agreed at the open council meeting in January that professional statements would be obtained with EO funding as necessary. These were to be shared with the campaign group and others who might wish to use them in their response. The campaign group in the meantime have obtained a report from a friendly solicitor and are pursuing other professional statements as well. EO has been advised by legal counsel not to seek formal 'counsel's opinion' (which would have formed a legal statement) on the guidance. Instead EO is now taking expert legal assistance with its response. EO is still pursuing statements for the response from psychologists and educationalists.

In addition, in a letter from the executive they have assured us of the genuineness of the consultation process and have promised that after the consultation date they will meet us for discussion on the issues raised. This meeting will form a further part of the consultation process, and they also assure us that they are ready to amend the draft on the basis of the consultation results.

However, local authorities, the association of Directors of Education and C.O.S.L.A. (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) are also contributors to the consultation and we must ensure this time round that the voice of the experts - i.e. home educators - gets due weight. The fact that there are three home education organizations lends strength to our collective cause. Different voices with different qualities of tone and content demonstrate our message of "one size does not fit all" and "Home education Works".

At the time of writing there was no news on the possibility of a debate on the motion calling for the scrapping of the guidance, but the march on February 7th was a great success with home educators marching together through Edinburgh to parliament under the 'Freedom in Education' banner and releasing many colourful helium balloons. This march, organised with dedicated effort by the independent campaign group, was a big success in bringing attention to the issue and it also achieved its aim of being a family event with a celebratory atmosphere.

In addition, MSPs have found their mailbags the heavier for home educators lobbying their support, and awareness of home education and the guidance issue has certainly been raised.

For now though it's back to the 'response' drawing board ...and ...watch this space.

Ann Samuel Till ann.samueltilt@btinternet.com

PS thanks to those of you who have sent very useful contributions and some encouraging support for the work EO is doing on the guidance.

SCOTLAND AND EO

Your Country Needs You !

I seem to be doing a lot of jobs in EO in Scotland at the moment, which has arisen not exactly by choice - more by default. I'm a busy home educator juggling too many balls in my life, just like the rest of you - and I can't really keep this up. It has become increasingly obvious to me that with just a few more hands on deck the good job EO does through its local contacts and enquiries and membership secretaries can be spread out a bit more and no job become too much for any one member. This also guarantees that when life pops up and gets in the way the work carries on relatively seamlessly. You know the sort of thing: sickness and diarrhoea, decorating, birth and death and oh yes home educating (no matter how you do it! I'm sure while it's certainly autonomous, my ten-year-old keeping me going with cups of tea while I do this, is not the idea long term.)

EO in Scotland needs more EO members doing stuff for EO members in Scotland! After all that's what we're about isn't it: being in charge of our own lives and doing what needs to be done ourselves? It's all very manageable when it's broken into its parts and I believe would benefit from greater sharing. One of the attractive things about the way EO works is that it's not around personalities or individuals. It's around the jobs needing to be done and enabling each other. Our ethos is give and take: today me, tomorrow you and throw in a big dollop of compassion for young ones and parents.

For example, amongst other things I have been acting enquiries secretary for a while which I have found to be one of the most satisfying jobs I have done in EO. There's no evangelising because the enquirers phone you and already want to know... It's so different from those questions in the supermarket or wherever and you often put the phone down knowing you have made a difference. You've given someone the information which allows them to make important choices and indeed that they have the choices. Choices which in turn can change a child's life from despairing misery to hope for happiness, surely a birthright.

It's not difficult. The legal information is not big and is easily learned (no matter what myths are put about) and the quality you need is compassionate good listening.

Would you consider covering for telephone enquiries for one week in eight? This would make a real difference. Ring me.

There are five local contacts at present and EO needs local contacts in Strathclyde, Grampian and Tayside. Being local contact does not need to be time consuming. It can be as big or as minimal as you can manage. It does not need to include organizing events. It does not need you to become a liaison person with the education authority unless you want to do this and it does not need to be done in isolation. There are several regions elsewhere in the UK where the job is shared by two families and this seems to work well. As local contact for Lothian and covering for Borders I was delighted when Jane Bathgate agreed to become LC for the Borders. We decided to do Lothian and Borders jointly. This is working really well. I have found it so supportive and Jane doesn't feel dropped in the deep end.

If you think you might want to give it a try (with or without a co-contact) or just to find out more, give me or Isobel Boqucki (Local Contact Coordinator) a ring.

Ann Samuel Till < ann.samueltil@btinternet.com >

One family's home-educating experience

My husband, Andrew, and I (Josie) took our eldest child, Hannah, out of state school just before her 6th birthday because of bullying. Up until two weeks beforehand we did not realise home educating even existed but, by chance, a girl in the same class left in favour of home educating. When we took Hannah out of school we had had no time to prepare for it nor even discuss it much. Because of our lack of experience we panicked and spent two and a half school terms trying to cover everything under the sun in a structured Monday to Friday timetable! I burnt myself out preparing lessons and keeping to a strict structure; I was so frightened by the responsibility of home educating. How I've changed!

After almost a year Hannah decided she wanted to try our local Rudolf Steiner school and I must say I was quite relieved about her decision! Although in the end Hannah only spent three terms there, it proved an invaluable time. Not only did it expand our narrow-mindedness on education techniques, inspiring us with new ideas and giving us the confidence to try a completely different style of education, but it boosted Hannah's confidence so much to realise that the bullying from her previous school was in no way her fault. She made friends really easily and her confidence (which had virtually been destroyed the year before) soared and she became once again a happy little girl, positively blooming! After a year Hannah decided she wanted to go back to home educating. This time we were ready and willing!

That was June 1997 and we've been home-ed-ing since. Our youngest child, Yasmin (almost 8 years old) has not been to playgroup, nursery or school. Our education timetable went out of the window some time ago and we are now all very comfortable with home-ed-ing. It seems to us that, no matter how you choose to do it, home-ed-ing is a way of life. There are no rights or wrongs. Whatever suits each family is the 'right' way for them. Home ed-ing families are probably far more diverse in all sorts of ways than more conventional families, so it's nice to be respectfully supportive of one another rather than competitive.

Anyway, our situation now takes the following format: Hannah (now 12) has been inspired to take it upon herself to organise her own lessons (previous to this we hadn't done any structured work for the best part of two years), having helped her friend (who does go to school) with her homework. When Hannah saw the amount of work her friend has been doing, she decided it was high time she knuckled down to learning a bit more!. No-one else has been involved with her decision and she comes to either myself or Andrew if she needs help with anything. I'm not sure whether her enthusiasm will last - maybe she'll drift in and out of it - but at the moment it's wonderful to see and we're very proud of her for taking responsibility for her own education which, after all, is what it's about when you become mature enough.

Yasmin has taught herself to read and is slowly learning to write. She's learnt a great deal from Hannah, books, television, conversations, visits, etc. - the same as all children do from their very first year of life.

We are so much more relaxed about home ed-ing now. Everyone in our house gets on with their own thing and we accommodate, support, assist and encourage one another, adults and children alike. I have had loads of support from both my daughters (and Andrew!) while I've been training as a Kinesiology practitioner. Perhaps witnessing me studying has encourage them in some way too.

My daughters rarely fall out and spend a great deal of time playing together. We see a few friends here and there but spend most of our week doing our own thing. Both Hannah and Yasmin are interested in

crystals, music, all forms of art, energy work of any kind, writing and performing plays, dancing, playing on the computer or with their toys, watching TV etc. NB: with regard to watching TV, by the way, we are fairly careful about what they watch and limit their time watching it, but I think it's been invaluable in the amount of information they have gained from various programmes - the school ones are great, as are a lot of others.

Their future? Well, I think we'll just carry on as we are. If Hannah and Yazzy want to take qualifications at the age of 15, 18, 22, 35 or 56, they will be encouraged and supported all the way. If they don't, they'll be encouraged and supported in whatever they are doing. Education is for life, not just for childhood, and I think it's a real shame that this country's education system is taking away so much of our children's childhoods. My own view is that children (and adults) should be encouraged to create their own work: to set up their own business making enough money to live on doing something that is uniquely theirs. Relevant qualifications, skills etc. can be learned gradually along the way at an easy, enjoyable pace. One of the many advantages of home educating is that there is no age limit unless you actually want there to be!

For us, the most valuable education anyone can have is in successful relationships. This covers everything - the vast array of emotions and feelings we all have, thoughts, beliefs, self-respect/esteem, compassion, understanding, empathy, etc. If a child learns all of this he/she will cope extremely well in life. Both our daughters have a strong sense of who they are, combined with a good proportion of self-respect and understanding of fellow humans. I think we are educating them well enough for them to live happily in this world of ours and also to take responsibility for their own happiness, which then has a knock-on effect on the people around them. As far as Andrew and I are concerned, that's all that matters - academic education takes second place.

However you home educate, keep at it! It really seems the best way. Quite a few people have mentioned in their letters about stress and rushing around and having bad days - if it happens too often you need to reassess things and be kinder to yourselves - life is to be enjoyed, not endured! When it's just the odd day here and there, don't worry about it - none of us is superhuman! Just cancel everything for the day, do only what you absolutely have to do and remember that it's just a minor hiccup! Have fun the next day, and the next and the next!!!

Could I also add that the four of us are in a major transition phase at the moment - getting ready to go travelling around Europe later this year (once Andrew has finished converting our van into a motorhome). We have no plans about how long we are going - maybe a year, maybe a lifetime! Either way, we'd be interested in hearing from other families who have experienced anything similar - do please contact us. (Do check out our website - not quite up and running yet but should be soon - to follow our travel experiences: www.towardseutopia.com)

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RE M I N D E R ... the EO 25th Birthday Celebration ... Leicestershire
29 August - 2 September 2002 ... many more details in next newsletter.

Dances of Universal Peace meets Education Otherwise

Last summer there was a camp near Studland Bay in Dorset which brought together the D.V.P. (Dances of Universal Peace) community and the EO community. For myself - a veteran dance camp attendee (over 50 in the past 12 years) - it was a good and refreshing combination. What I really appreciated was a more child-centred perspective that isn't always present on a dance camp when the adult workshops tend to dominate and make family time difficult to fit in. This camp was definitely for families; children were encouraged to come dancing; adults were encouraged to join in games and play; there was lots of craft work, volleyball, bike rides to the sea (5 km) and evenings around the campfire with hot chocolate and marshmallows. One of the highlights for both adults and children (8+) was a visit to Branscombe Activity Centre situated next door to the camp site. Here, amongst other things, the challenges were climbing, abseiling and scaling vertical walls.

This year (July 28 - August 4) a similar camp will take place at the same location. D.V.P. is the main focus (see explanation below) and this will happen every day. Family time is top of the list of priorities so there will be lots of fun activities and free time every afternoon for beaching and relaxing. Education Otherwise families are warmly welcomed: please see the advert in this issue entitled 'Spirit of Youth'.

Dances of Universal Peace celebrate all the spiritual paths of the world. They can be devotional, meditative, joyful and uplifting; above all they are heart-opening. They involve singing a chant and simple movements and require no particular skills. Dances of Universal Peace take place all around the world with adults and children and are a very special way to create a heart space within a community.

Maliga Green, 13 Church Street, Crewkerne, Somerset, TA18 7HU Tel 01460 78719

No thanks, Dad, I'd rather go to school

We are a family of five: Anne, Damian, Miranda (5), Stanley (3) and Lilian (5 months) and we have been members of EO for one year. We decided to join EO and home educate our children at the same time as making other changes to our life that we had talked about but never done anything about.....this was after an experiment where I (Damian) worked full time as a teacher of secondary English and Drama, Anne stayed at home with Miranda and Stanley, and we lived as a nuclear family in suburbia. It didn't work!

We also decided to get rid of our car, have another baby and join a community.

A year later and Miranda goes to the local primary school - she wanted to, insisted even, and she loves it.....we have another car - couldn't manage without it.....however we did manage to have another baby - Lilian was born in October.....and we are living communally at Monkton Wyld Court near Charmouth in Dorset. Two plans out of four coming together is respectable, based on past performance! (we once had a plan to sail round the world, but that's another story..).

When Miranda said she wanted to go to school we had to ask ourselves what was more important: our child's right to self-determination, or our belief in home education as a better option than the school system. We decided that if school didn't work out at least we had the luxury of an alternative. We don't regret letting her go to school. We are sure that for Miranda it is the right option at the moment and she still thinks so too!

Monkton Wyld Community

We are still members of EO (though Stanley says he's going to school too...) and are holding a meeting for local home educating families once a week, on Tuesday mornings, here at Monkton Wyld Court. It is a wonderful place for children, which is one of the reasons we moved here. There is unlimited space, indoors and out, a kindergarten on site which Stanley goes to; it is very safe with no traffic to worry about, and of course there are plenty of other people about to play with and talk to. Living and working together, and having lots of visitors, volunteers and guests to look after, means that for adults it can be hard work but for children, it's paradise!

Monkton Wyld Court was built as a rectory in 1848 and has 11 acres of grounds including terraced lawns, football field, woods, fields, stream...and a great rope swing! In 1940 it became an independent progressive school with an emphasis on a holistic approach. In 1982 it closed and the teachers set up a resident community running courses, which is how it is today - making 2002 the 20th anniversary. Home education has been one of the many things going on here over the years so there has been a strong tradition of 'alternative' education here ever since the rector departed!

Family week for home educators

This year for the first time we are holding a 'family week' for home educating families. We usually run 10 family weeks a year, during half terms and Easter and Summer school holidays and they are definitely the most popular events. They are great fun with loads going on, from craft activities (such as making lanterns, puppets, felt-making, batik, driftwood mirrors...) to games (co-operative and competitive), singing and music (our most recent family week climaxed with a cabaret with performers aged 3 - 60!), to storytelling around the campfire and trips to the beach.

We try to create a sense of community by starting the day with a morning circle where we plan the day together and discuss whatever needs discussing, so that there is an awareness of the needs and feelings within the group, and so that individuals are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and others. This helps to create a safe, supportive atmosphere. We can only accommodate up to 35 people which means that there is an opportunity for everyone to get to know each other and no-one is excluded.

Guests sleep in shared rooms (2-6 beds in each) and we all eat together at lunch and supper. The food is all cooked here by us and is vegetarian, organic wherever possible and much of it comes from our own garden. We also milk our own cow and get to taste fresh, unpasteurised, non-homogenised Guernsey milk! We do cater for special diets, too.

The home educators' family week runs from Monday 22nd to Saturday 27th April and costs £60 for under 5s, £100 for 5 to 15 year olds, and £170 for adults. If it sounds expensive, remember that all you have to do is get here - everything else is provided. We guarantee you'll enjoy it and we'd love to meet you. Please see our advert in the back for contact details and get in touch if you need to know more.

Damian Pullen and Anne Hallett, Monkton Wyld Court, Charmouth, Bridport, Dorset

"We don't go to school" Philippa Walker, director/producer of the Channel 4 'Witness' programme, is keen to have feedback from EO members. Please send to: rob.wade@tvu.ac.uk or Anne Wade, 19 Perkin Close Wembley HA0 2LY who will collate feedback; please say if you wish your name to be included.

LETTERS PAGES

Lincolnshire meetings?

My husband and I home educate our little boy, James who is six next month. He is funny, bright and I love having him around, however it is really hard work as James has an Autistic condition - Asperger's to be precise - and as if that wasn't enough for one little person, he suffers from Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome as well: he prefers to do any educating work at really unbelievable hours such as four in the morning or seven at night just when I'm trying to unwind him for bed time.

We would like to know if there are any other EO people in the Sleaford, Boston, Grantham area who would like to meet up perhaps every fortnight. James has answered quite a few penpals letters but sadly no-one has written back.

*Elaine Grange, October House,
1 Main Street, Scredington, Lincs. NG34 0AE
Tel: 01529 415281*

GCSE Help!

I am currently home educating my two youngest children, my son aged 5 and my daughter aged 15. The reason I write is because we are struggling to find a GCSE syllabus that does not require course work. We did discover that an IGCSE might be of some use but we have received lots of conflicting information. Also we were told that it was only possible to take the exams in certain schools and colleges, none of which are close to our home. I have been in touch with many of the local schools and colleges but, so far, no joy. As you can see, we are desperate!

I would appreciate any information or advice. My daughter is taking English Lang and Lit, Maths, Science (Biology and Physics), Home Economics, Textiles and Art.

*Maureen Burgess,
22 Myrtle Grove, Waterloo, Liverpool L22 2AG*

Europe on a budget ...

We are a home educating family with four sons aged 2, 4, 6 and 8. We live in the Ashdown Forest and are very keen to travel in Europe for about six months. We would be interested to talk to anyone who has any experience of this, or any suggestions of ways of doing this fairly inexpensively. We would prefer to stay in two or three different places for two or three months each rather than travel all the time.

*Joanne McNaughton, Fernhurst, Mardens Hill,
Crowborough, E. Sussex TN6 1XH
Tel. 01892 665151*

Lake District weekend

I write to express my thanks, appreciation and gratitude for the wonderful weekend we had in the Lake District. I have recently become the local contact for the Dumfries and Galloway region and thought it would be nice to meet up with some like-minded people. However, getting there was quite another thing. On the journey (I was the driver) I wondered if I should have bothered ... rain, fog, wind, not knowing where I was going on little, windy roads, poor visibility, child sick in car, getting lost. However, I breathed a sigh of relief when I reached the welcoming youth hostel. I was greeted with warmth (people and place!). The food was delicious and in abundance. It was interesting talking to different families about what 'method' they use in educating their children, whether that be structured or autonomous. The main point being that we know and believe that home education is the way forward and that unity is the key (no matter where you are from). I came home feeling refreshed, a few pounds heavier but with a renewed vision in promoting Education. Otherwise in the best possible way.

*Marie Steenson,
Castledykes Cottage, Kingholm Road, Dumfries*

Starting out with EO

I loved the letter on page 20 of the February newsletter (name and address supplied). The author struck a chord within me. She voiced my feelings. I didn't want her letter to end. I finished feeling 'tell me more'.

I started home education in May 1993. My sons were 10, 7 and 4. My oldest son just didn't cope with school. The general feeling was that because he didn't fit in he was somehow inadequate. I felt such a powerful anger that my wonderful, sensitive, caring, loving, intelligent, inquisitive son was not accepted or liked and that made me realise that it wasn't he who was a failure, but the school system. What a wonderful discovery to learn that he didn't have to go to school! I send my heartfelt thanks to all those pioneers who made this choice possible. And also my heartfelt thanks to Education Otherwise and everyone who helped me in those terrifying, glorious early days.

After a few months my middle son also wanted to come out of school. They have all 'dabbled' with school for short periods over the years, but the knowledge that they didn't have to go gave them an inner strength, I think, I hope. I think that the worst thing for my children was their feeling of being different. Their friends all went to school and that's why they tried it again, for a short time.

My oldest son is now 19 and in full time work. My middle son is 15 and at college and my youngest 13 is now home educated. I feel I can now relax and look back over those 9 years (is that all it is? is it really so long ago? It sometimes seems a lifetime, sometimes only yesterday). I think that's when I started growing to adulthood, even though I was 41 at the time. It was a traumatic time for me, and I suppose for my children, although I tried to shield and protect them. There were times when I wanted to throttle them for not appreciating the huge cost to me.

Then I would remind myself why I was doing this. It was so that they could grow strong, confident, healthy, unafraid to be who they are. There were times when my two oldest boys would blame me

for 'making them different'. They would tell me that I shouldn't have given them the choice. This is difficult for me to write and I could never have written this if I wasn't now in the safe position of looking back, because now they are older, one working, one at college, and they are strong, confident, healthy and unafraid to be who they are.

For me, the experience of taking my children out of school was a bit like being pushed out of an aeroplane. Not something I would choose to do under normal circumstances, suffering from vertigo as I do, but WHAT AN EXPERIENCE! My parachute was EO and the people in it. Love you all.

Frankie Inglis.

*145 Maxey Road, Dagenham, Essex RM9 5HS
Tel: 0208 595 0934 Email: FINGLIS8@aol.com*

Response to 'Callie'

I'm just writing in support of 'Callie Wirrl' (Agony Column - Dec NL). I've missed the February deadline (I was getting my own newsletter together and out...) and I don't feel qualified to make a published statement as I don't even (officially) home educate... but she didn't give a contact address and I really wanted to say a few things. They will be easily shot down by the converted, but I feel them just the same. (Later) wrote them (something about the whole concept of 'community building'), deleted it. It's not clear, because I'm struggling. And that's the point, I think, I respond to her struggle. I love people who can stay clear enough to keep the balls in the air, and not feel they have the one correct solution to life, the universe and everything - though I understand lots of people NEED that, to function effectively and not be crippled by self-doubt. Same as I empathise with everyone who went to a camp and felt excluded, but equally with those of you who make the point about personal responsibility ... All ye who struggle, get in touch!

*Hazel. 40, Meadow Road, Worthing, W.Sussex.
BN11 2SG
harper@child98.freemove.co.uk*

LANCASHIRE - One-off special visit to
Martin Mere Wildfowl and Wetlands Centre.
Monday 29th April pm.

1 1/2 hr educational programme on
the life cycle of a swan,

guided tour, adventure playground and activities.

Places for 30 adults and 30 children from age 3-11+.

Price £2.65 each + extra for activities.

Payment in advance will be necessary as it is a pre-booked 'schools' visit to secure lower price and programme.

Please ring Kerris on 01254 207499, or email me at
kerris@spiraldesigns.co.uk to book a place, or for more
details, as soon as possible.

www.freedom-in-education.co.uk

I am developing a new website - freedom-in-education.co.uk - and am asking other EO members if they would like to contribute to it.

My wife, Lin, and I have home-educated our three children, who are now aged 20, 17 and 15, for the past eleven years: for me, it has been a very enriching experience and I am convinced that my children could not have received a comparable education anywhere else. Being taught at home has allowed them to retain their independence; has meant that they have not had to compromise on being themselves; and has made learning something that they enjoy.

I don't believe that the public at large is really aware that home-education offers a simple and effective alternative to school: that is why I have started the freedom-in-education website. Its function is to demonstrate that a good education is not an unattainable ideal - but is something that many ordinary people manage to provide for their children every day.

The site contains articles, news, links and letters. I would appreciate comments and contributions from EO members - so, if you have the time, I would be grateful to anyone who looks through the site and lets me know what they think.

Gareth Lewis, Le Nezert, 22160 Duault, France
Tel/fax : 0033 296 215597

THE LOUISE VERRAN FUND

The Louise Verran Fund is open to applications from home educators for financial help, to be considered in early April 2002.

We have had some serious problems with mail going astray because of difficulties at the local sorting office in Gloucestershire, which only came to light last month (December), and are very concerned that some people may have applied for help last November without receiving any response from us. If anyone applied to the Louise Verran Fund and did not receive a reply telling them whether their application was successful or not, we can only apologise and ask that the application is re-submitted.

To prevent further mishaps, all enquiries should be sent to:

The Louise Verran Fund, c/o 62 Wallwood Road,
LONDON E11 1AZ

More information about the fund is available at:
<<http://www.free-range-education.co.uk/index.html/lvf.html>>

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"WHAT RULES THE WORLD?"

by American poet William Ross Wallace (1819-81)

They say that man is mighty,
He governs land and sea,
He wields a mighty sceptre
O'er lesser powers that be;
But a mightier power and stronger
Man from his throne has hurled,
And the hand that rocks the cradle
Is the hand that rules the world.

Regards, Diana. ("Di Cox" in the EO domain!)
[mailto:dianawhiting@yahoo.co.uk]

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*Have you responded to that questionnaire
on council membership yet?
And there's more homework on p 48 ...*

A Preliminary Report on The Home Education Stand At The Education Show, March 2002

We spoke to at least:

- o 79 people on Thursday
- o 84 people on Friday
- o 62 people on Saturday

In total: 225, plus those not logged and those met while volunteers went walkabout around the show.

I would like to thank everyone who helped in any way and I would also like to thank all those who gave funds towards the cost of the stand. Particularly Wendy Bance and EO who put up the lion's share of the cost. I would also like to thank all those children who gave us their art work to decorate the stand to make it child centred rather than the sterile appearance so many of the stands had.

The other stands around us were very impressed and rather jealous of the numbers of those visiting us. They reported that they were getting around 40-50 a day, many of whom were casual and would not follow up - unlike our visitors who came looking for us.

Who we spoke to:

Many home educators, every one of whom took something away and seemed to find something on the stand they didn't know about.

A significant proportion of professionals and other stand holders. Almost all visitors to the stand came looking for us and were delighted to find a HE stand at the show.

In addition to those visiting the stand, at quiet times I went walkabout and spoke to a number of stand holders - who took me more seriously I thought as a stand holder myself than when I was a visitor to the show in previous years - those exhibitor badges are invaluable.

I spoke to voluntary organisations representing families who to some extent overlap our community. I am hoping that they will contact us over the next few days and weeks and we may see links being made to other parts of the Home Education community.

Incidentally, while on the stand we faced no hostility of any kind and on walkabout I had only one negative reaction, from the representative of a company providing evening extra tuition. He was from Australia and seemed to think that we were selling our kids short.

I think we can expect that a number of people will join the list and EO as a result of the stand.

What we spoke about:

We were approached by a small number of companies who wanted to develop links with the HE community. Most notable were conversations I had with a WH Smiths rep and on my walkabout with LEGO. There were others and I will report on developments if they occur.

I also had a conversation with an examinations board about a growing trend towards course work and projects which makes it difficult for home educated children to complete. They have promised to research this issue and will get back to me.

Suggestions:

I have a number of suggestions for a future stand at the show which I will develop but highlight here:

- 1) a bigger stand - around 50% bigger but that would mean in total we would need to raise upwards of £2,500 to pay for a stand. I realise that this is an expensive operation but I feel it was a great success which could be built upon.

- 2) we need a well-written, targeted leaflet giving details of all the support organisations and main websites on one piece of paper which we can hand out with a copy of the guidelines - and we need perhaps 500 of them for people to give to their friends.
- 3) we need more staff. We need at least three people, preferably 4, available at all times.

In conclusion it was a very rewarding, if exhausting piece of work, in which I was pleased to play a part.

Mike Fortune Wood.

This report has been edited by Penny Clarke. The full report can be found at <http://www.home-education.org.uk/ed-show.htm> If you would like a printed copy, please send an sae to Penny Clarke 5 Ridge Way, Aldridge, Walsall WS9 0HL. Any comments about EO involvement in this project could also be sent to Penny (Tel 01922 745465 or pennyclarke@blueyonder.co.uk)

HES FES

I am writing in response to letters that have appeared in the EO magazine over the last few months regarding the Home Educators' Seaside Festival.

Two of the correspondents stated that the families at HES FES 2001 "came ready cliqued". I am concerned that the correspondents felt this. The people who have attended each of the previous 4 festivals are some of the most friendly and open minded I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. Families come from all over the UK, Europe and the USA. Pretty cross sections of society they are too, from all walks of life and with many different beliefs and ideas. A large amount of positive feedback from last year's event was received, much of it celebrating the atmosphere and the accepting and non-judgmental nature of the families there. For anyone not arriving on the first day there is a clearly stated system on the web site, the programme booklet, the notice board and of course in the FAQ sheet that all families receive, along with their tickets when these are sent to them.

HES FES is the World's largest gathering of Home Educators, with numbers attending HES FES 2002 expected to reach over 1800 adults and children. Many families have met through and only see each other at HES FES. It is natural they will have a lot to say to one another. Most of these families also mix freely and sociably with whomever they come in contact with. It may be worth considering also, that the reason that someone doesn't immediately engage in conversation with another could well be the result of shyness and nervousness and not due to an unfriendly nature.

We received dozens of letters and e-mails after and before HES FES 2001 giving feedback and offering suggestions. Where possible the points raised have been acted upon for this year's event. A lot of effort by a lot of people has always been made to try and provide a warm and welcoming atmosphere and this will be true of this year's HES. The week will kick off on the Sunday with a "Grand Day Out": an all-day line up of music, dancing, workshops, activities and fun. This will give families an opportunity right at the start of the festival to come together for anyone who wants to participate. Also included in the day's festivities is a "New to HES FES/New to Home Education" drop-in corner, kindly organised by the very friendly and welcoming Otherwise Club who are based in N London.

A huge personal thanks to the many, whose time and effort has made and continues to make the festival what it is. Here's to meeting friends, old, new and yet to be met at HES FES 2002. See you all in May.

Andy Blewett, London (HES FES 2002 co-ordinator)

HES FES, PO Box 20284, London NW1 3WY - info@hesfes.co.uk www.hesfes.co.uk

EDUCATING ARCHIE in EO's anniversary year

Mrs G & Archie look back at 25 years with the Inspector: happy days!



HOME EDUCATION IN THE NEWS

With the news that one in four pupils now leaves school in Britain without even one good GCSE, coming at the same time as reports of an estimated ten thousand teenagers who have simply dropped out of the education system permanently and cannot be accounted for, OFSTED's simultaneous claim that teaching standards in schools are higher than ever rings a little hollow. Coincidentally or not, the number of home-educated children is rising steadily and now stands at 140,000 or 1.5 per cent of the school-age population. It is reported that the main reasons parents are withdrawing their children from school are worries about too frequent testing and bullying, and that the wider availability of online education makes learning from home an increasingly attractive option to many (the next newsletter will include a report from the Independent on the phenomenon).

It is perhaps not surprising in the circumstances that there may be something of a backlash against educational choice in the offing. Those in favour of the so-called stricter guidelines for home education in Scotland have recently been trundling out the old prejudices about home-educated children missing out on the socialising and rough and tumble of school life. So it was good to see lots of those children in the recent Channel Four documentary *'We don't go to school'* enjoying plenty of interaction with others as well as a relaxed and sociable family life in and out of the house. It almost looked normal, really.

The article below, taken from the Daily Mail, features three families who opted out of the system. Tellingly, the mother who chose to send her children back to school seemed to have made no friends among other home-educating families. For most of us it's what makes all the difference, and the recent growth in EO's membership is making that easier all the time.

**These parents chose to teach their children at home.
So can a child really flourish away from school?**

The Class Divide - By Rachel Halliwell - Daily Mail 7 November 2001

With national league tables and endless tests, not to mention the lack of discipline, is it any wonder that parents are concerned for their children's education? But would you go as far as taking your children out of school and teaching them yourself? Here, FEMAIL talks to three parents who tried it, with varying results. Suzanne Whitehead, 37, a former housing officer, lives with husband Steve, 39, manager of an engineering company, and their children Oliver, nine, Cara, eight, Isobel, four, and Fenella, one, in Norfolk. Suzanne says:

YES. We took Oliver and Cara out of school two summers ago. It was not because they were unhappy - far from it. They enjoyed being with their friends, and the rough and tumble of the playground. But they kept coming home saying their lessons were boring. It was clear to us they weren't being challenged and were in danger of under-achieving.

They found the compulsory literacy and numeracy hours dull and repetitive. It's no secret that these lessons are geared towards less able children - those whom the teachers must focus on if they want their school to perform well in the league tables. But, of course, brighter children like ours suffer as a result. We decided we could do a better job educating them ourselves.

Taking them out was easy. We just informed their headmaster in writing, and told the local education authority that we were meeting their educational needs from home. Legally, as long as you say that you are providing them with an education, the children don't have to follow the national curriculum or sit any exams, not even GCSEs. The education authority said they will send an assessor to check that our children are learning and to follow their progress. But so far no one has contacted us - and I don't think they will.

I firmly believe that school is not primarily about learning: it's an institution where children are conditioned to accept what I regard to be an unreasonable level of control. My children are confident, self-assured and extremely mature. People say school prepares youngsters for the real world, but I don't know of any other situation where you must put your hand up to speak, and you can't even nip to the toilet without asking permission.

I'm often asked how I cope and whether I've made things difficult for myself. But I find this way of life easier than when they were at school. They would come home tired and grumpy and I couldn't do anything with them. Now, we enjoy real quality time together and we don't have to grab five minutes here and there on the way to and from school. It also means the children can work at their own pace and concentrate on the subjects which really capture their imagination.

We don't stick to a rigid timetable. The children eat when they're hungry and sleep when they're tired. Cara is often so engrossed in her studies - which can be anything from an art project to an historical essay - that she works until midnight. The next day, she might sleep until lunchtime. Some people might say this isn't good training for children, because at some point they'll have to fit in to the nine-to-five grind. But I think they should escape this for as long as they can. And who knows, they might end up working for themselves, or become entrepreneurs, and then they can work whatever hours they choose.

Much of our children's learning is done through play rather than learning by rote or by testing them - methods which I think are superficial and don't really challenge the brain. Sometimes, they don't even know they are learning. We do mental arithmetic in the car, so they regard it as a game rather than a maths lesson. On a trip to the supermarket, we might find ourselves discussing inflation as we talk about how food prices have gone up over the years. For history, we recently had a Tudor day when we dressed up and ate a Tudor lunch, then visited a monastery in the afternoon. I learned as much as they did, and we all had great fun.

I enjoyed school myself, but I honestly believe my children are getting a better education than I did. I took a degree and a postgraduate degree, and if our children choose to, then we will help them do the same. They can return to school whenever they want to. I have absolute confidence that they will be able to slot straight back in. In fact, they'll probably be streets ahead of other children. But if they want me to take them through secondary level, then I'll relish the challenge.

Steve is as involved in their education as I am. Because we don't follow a timetable, it means he can work with them on the computer in the evenings and we can go on trips at the weekends. If one of the children is tired or just not in the mood to study, then that's fine - I'm happy for them to do something else. They absorb far more when they are in the right frame of mind. They still see their friends in the afternoons. We also spend lots of time with other children who are home educated, whom we met through the support group Education Otherwise. The contact stops them feeling different.

Of course, the downside is that I don't get any free time - but then who does when they have a small baby to look after? If the children ever want to sit exams when they're older, they'll be able to do so. But only when they are ready - not when the system dictates they should be.

NO. ANGELA POLLARD, 47, home-educated 13-year-old twins Jonathan and Catharine for six months before they asked if they could go back to school. Angela, a teacher, lives with her husband Richard, 46, a commercial pilot, and the children in Rugby. The children attend The Harris C of E High School. Angela says:

MY HUSBAND'S work meant that the children spent their early years in Kenya. When we came back, we planned to send them to a state school immediately. After all, a British education has always been regarded as one of the best in the world. But when we got back in January 2000, everyone was complaining about large class sizes and SATS exams, and obsessing over league tables. It was all rather off-putting. As a teacher, I was well-qualified to tutor my own children, and concerned enough about the state system to be sure I could educate them at least as well as it could.

At first, we were in our element. We had the freedom to explore stately homes, castles, battlefields and art galleries - all in the name of research. At home, we used the computer for projects and played educational games, which made learning great fun. Also, I could concentrate on the children's weaker subjects, such as maths. We saved so much time, too. At school, time is lost doing things such as lining up for assembly or lunch, and taking the register. Over lunch, we could chat about whatever subject we'd been looking at, and if there was anything they'd misunderstood I could go back over it with them.

But I didn't take into account one basic need - that children need to be among their peers. That, I now realise, is as vital to their personal growth as the subjects they learn. Although they had each other, they didn't have other friends. Nor were they likely to make any while their lives revolved around home. Catherine, in particular, would be reduced to tears by the lack of social interaction. She would see the neighbours' children returning home from school and playing in the street together, and she'd long to be a part of that. I thought we'd eventually find people in a similar situation to us, but there were very few home-educated children in our area, and none the same age as the twins.

Meanwhile, I was finding the issue of discipline a major problem. It's so much easier to argue with your mother than with your teacher, and if they didn't want to do something then they would give me one reason after another why they shouldn't. When I put my foot down, they would be resentful - especially where maths was concerned. I began to hanker after a more clearly defined role in their life. The roles of mother and teacher seemed for ever intertwined.

After six months, it wasn't getting any easier and Catharine asked me if she could go back to school. She was very diplomatic. She said she'd loved being at home with me, but she really needed to be with other children. She wanted a best friend again. Jonathan felt the same, so we visited some schools in the area and settled on a school that's a 20-minute walk from our home. Inevitably, it was tough on them at first, and a major culture shock after so long out of the school environment. They struggled to make friends and seemed as lonely in school as they had been out of it.

After three months of this we offered to take them both out again. The fact that they refused point-blank highlighted just how important it is for children to be with children their own age and not to feel different. It took them a year to finally settle. Now both of them have some great friends and are doing well academically.

I know I could have continued to meet all of their educational needs at home, but I could never have come close to satisfying their social needs. School is a place where you learn to interact with others and grow as

a person. It might be a drag having to be in on time and working when the timetable says you must, but that's what the real world is like.

I won't deny that I don't feel sad that I no longer teach my children myself, because the bits that worked were incredibly rewarding. But if I'd continued when it clearly wasn't meeting all of the children's needs, then I would have been doing it for myself and not for them. The children are happy - so I am, too.

YES. *DEBBIE BISHOP, 35, is an artist who has never sent her six-year-old son, Denny, to school. Denny's father Mark, 52, is a mechanical engineer. They live together at Swaffham, Norfolk. Debbie says:*

I was bullied mercilessly at school. I vowed that I would never send a child of mine to one and risk them suffering a similar ordeal. Mark was bullied, too, and felt exactly the same. In fact, we started our family only once we had ascertained that we would be able to educate our child at home.

When Denny was three, it was clear that he had a speech problem. His vocabulary never consisted of more than 25 words, and if he learned a new one then he would drop another. He was seen by an educational assessor several times and the results always showed that he was an extremely bright little boy. Yet his speech problem made him appear slow.

At toddler groups, he would get frustrated with the other children because they spoke too quickly for him, and then he would refuse to play with them. The staff thought he was just being difficult, which to me was further justification for keeping him out of school. In a large class, he might struggle to cope; but if I gave him one-to-one tuition, he would stand a much better chance of reaching his full potential.

I started taking him to play-groups with younger children - and he loved it. Instead of struggling to keep up, he thrived. It showed me just how important it is to allow a child to develop at their own pace. I have privately tutored other people's children in maths, English and art for years, so I knew I had the ability to teach my own son. I don't have any professional qualifications - just a natural flair for teaching children what I know, or what I learn myself from books.

Denny's education at home started way before most children start school. I've always read to him at every opportunity, and his reading is now particularly good. There's so much to learn from simply being at home. Planting bulbs in the garden, for example, is a marvellous learning experience as you talk about how they will grow.

Because we don't follow the national curriculum, I can let Denny lead me and concentrate on subjects that interest him. These can then be adapted to bring in other studies. For instance, he's always been fascinated by space, so for maths we count planets and put them in order, while for English we write stories about outer space. It's a wonderful way to teach. I'm constantly learning, too. If Denny asks me a question and I don't know the answer, then we find it out together. That's a real bonding experience. I don't know if Denny is developing at the same rate as his peers - that's not an issue for me. He's developing at his own pace, which is how I think it should be. At the weekends, we go as a family to science museums and art galleries, which all adds to his education. I don't know of any school where the children go on as many field trips as Denny does.

Of course, I appreciate some people will think I'm sheltering Denny from the real world because of my experiences as a child. But I believe it's children like Denny - who have experienced an alternative lifestyle - who go on to make a difference to the world. They see things differently - and we need more people like that.

Although Denny is an only child, he's never lonely. He always has me or his dad with him, and he seems to prefer adult company. When we're out, people always comment on how lovely his manners are and how happy he seems. When I tell them that I teach him at home, you see them asking him questions to see if he's bright. He never lets me down. I don't think Denny would enjoy school life. On the odd occasion I've taken him into a playground to pick up a friend's child, he has found the hustle and bustle extremely intimidating. He does mix with other children in his own age, though. We're members of Education Otherwise and regularly meet up with other youngsters who are home-taught.

It's hard being full-time mother and teacher, simply because you get so little time to yourself. But the benefits far outweigh that. We're exceptionally close, and I know he is being cared for full-time by the most appropriate person - his mother. My husband is delighted by how Denny is developing. His speech is now excellent - which we doubt would be the case if he was stuck in a class with 30 children.

Of course, the day may come when he will ask to go to school. If it does, then I will be very sad - but I'll support him and let him go. But I do hope that he'll allow me to educate him until he's ready to sit his GCSEs. It would be a marvellous experience for us both.

With thanks to Emma Smith, Helen Donaldson, Priscilla Simmons, Priscilla Park Weir and all those who have sent me news and suggestions, you have made a big difference. Special thanks to Anne Rix this month for all that typing.

Ann Kennedy Smith

ADVERTISEMENTS

Highland Traditional Stonebuilt Crofters Cottage in the Spey valley.

Beside woodland and river Spey Lovingly restored, d/g c/h. Sleeps 4, log fire, great views, well equipped, large garden, 100+ attractions within easy reach by car, incl skiing and beach. From just £150 pw. Mention EO when booking so they are donated £10 on completion of your stay.

Please call: Laurie: 01895 677576

<http://stlyon.200hits.com/main.htm>

SUPPORT A NEW CONCEPT IN CHILDREN'S MAGAZINES

Alternative KIDZ - an exciting new full-colour magazine, completely FREE OF ADVERTISING and offering 32 pages of fresh and original features, news, views, puzzles, competitions and jokes. £12 will guarantee you the next four seasonal issues or you can try out a single issue for £3.50 (current issue) or £2.50 (back issue). Please send cheques made payable to 'Alternative KIDZ' to 47 Woodplace Lane, Coudson, Surrey CR5 1NE Tel: 01737 556768.
www.alternativekidz.com

Fathers & Sons Weekends - May and Oct 2002

To all fathers with young boys! I am running Fathers & Sons weekends situated at Avon Tyrell in Dorset in beautiful woods overlooking the New Forest. The exact cost is to be set but will be in the region of £200-300.

Various outdoor activities: archery, canoeing, raft building and climbing. Also story telling, bonfires and a night-time adventure! Fathers sleep in the same room as their sons in comfortable and warm wooden accommodation.

If you are interested in coming along, please contact Ben Gold Home phone: 020 8886

9160 Mobile: 07957 254 629

Email: benjamengold@hotmail.com

Life Learning - The International Magazine of Self-directed Learning

A new, high quality, bimonthly subscription magazine dedicated to providing trustworthy, inspiring information and a forum for discussion about self-directed, life-based learning. The first issue is now in production, for publication March 1. Subscription, advertising and contributor information can be found on our website
<http://www.lifelearningmagazine.com>.

Self-catering Cottage Accommodation with practising home educators. 3 miles Canterbury, Kent.

Sleeps 6 or 8 at a squeeze (4 bedrooms) £320-£480 pw around £200 for 2 days or individually £15 per night sometimes available.

Child friendly garden, countryside, seaside, bus route

Andy 01227 700771

DYSLEXIA TUTOR offers one-to-one tuition by distance learning. Lessons are e-mailed weekly or bi-weekly, with careful monitoring of your child's progress. Help your child to overcome barriers to reading, writing and spelling with phonetic, fun, multi-sensory methods. English Literature and Language tuition also available. Visit <http://www.dyslexialessons.com>.

EARTH HEART

2/3 bedroom barn conversion for sale in 7 family community, some home education. Rural Derbyshire, pasture, woodland, river.

01335 372124

Services and products advertised on these pages have not been endorsed by Education Otherwise. EO does not make recommendations about any tutors or youth leaders, whether members of the Association or not. Use of people in any such role, whether paid or unpaid, remains the responsibility of the parent.

ADVERTISEMENTS

Choice in Education

The independent monthly publication for home educators. A year's subscription costs £10. Please make cheque payable to 'Choice in Education'. For a sample copy send A5 SAE plus £1
PO Box 20284 London NW1 3WY
 Tel/fax 0208 969 0893

Also available: Truancy Information Cards and the Elective Home Education Legal Guidelines.

www.choiceineducation.org.uk

THINGS TO DO!

Brings Science alive for children with our continually widening range of fascinating Science Kits now spanning the curriculum! Also wooden games, intriguing puzzles and craft items
MANY ITEMS LESS THAN £3

Request a catalogue now:

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**Ashtree Marketing, PO Box 153, Alton,
 GU34 1AW**

Free Range Education

A book for parents: for those contemplating home education, for those families just starting out and those just plain interested in this fast growing form of education. Full of ideas, experiences and practical suggestions.
 Editor Terri Dowty, foreword by Dr Alan Thomas

Published by Hawthorn Press
 Order a copy at your library or bookshop.
www.free-range-education.co.uk

Old newsletters

Nearly all from Dec 84 (issue 38) to present, available free. Prefer to give them away as a set with sharing postage cost. Will be recycled 1 month after this ad!
 John Sullivan 0115 9231951
john@vernonbowles.co.uk

LOWER SHAW FARM

Weekend courses, gatherings and holidays - for adults and children - Friendly atmosphere, wholesome food, organic gardens and animals. Family events, circus skills, stone carving, basket making, music & singing, drumming, yoga, astronomy, celebrations. Write or phone: Lower Shaw Farm, S haw, Nr Swindon, Wilts, SN5 5JP
 01793 771080
andrea@lsfarm.globalnet.co.uk

HES FES 2002

The Home Educators' Seaside Festival
 The World's biggest gathering of home educators now in it's 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

Home Educators' Family Week

**Monkton Wyld Court, Nr
 Charmouth, Dorset**

Crafts, games, dance, music, beach trips, campfires and more!

**Monday 22nd April to Sat 27th
 April**

**Under 5's: £60 5-15yrs: £100
 Adults: £170**

Please phone 01297 560342 or visit www.monktonwyldcourt.org
 Maximum 35 people; delicious vegetarian food, 11 acres of grounds, lots of indoor space too.

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ADVERTISEMENTS

EARLY READING DIRECT

can help you teach your child to read. Designed by teachers who understand the value of home education, the pack is full of fun activities which develop first reading skills at a pace that's right for you and your child. It contains Workbooks, Reading books, Alphabet and Picture Word Cards and costs just £29.95

01425 615019

www.earlyreadingdirect.co.uk

Rainbow Circle Magic Hat Camps

The "magic" is that we all put in as much money and energy as we can manage (there is no site crew or creche) and have a wonderful experience camping in beautiful countryside.

A variety of camps running between 26th April to 1st September.

For information visit:

www.rainbowcircle.co.uk

or phone: Annette 01423 500699

Sarah 01970 617570

Human Scale Education Annual Conference 2002

Schools can be Different!

One day conference for teachers, parents and policy makers will discuss how to change larger secondary schools into smaller learning communities.

Saturday 18th May 2002

10.30 to 5.00

Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford

Contact HSE: 01275 3321516

info@hse.org.uk www.hse.org.uk

For Sale

BBC MUZZY

A video French course for children

£60 (cost £99)

Contact: Elaine Bowyer

01823 335289

NatureKids

Part / Full Time Education with an emphasis on Learning through Experiences, Home from Home and in time with Nature. Ideal for all children, especially those with Dyslexia or Dyspraxia. Small group, personal attention, ages 5 - 13 years.

Please phone for further details. Felicity 020 8441 8309

Barnet / Potters Bar / St Albans / Hemel Hempstead areas

HOME SCHOOL SUPPLIES

The One Stop Home Ed Shop. for all your 'home school' requirements. Primary English, Math, Music, Craft etc... 'Keepers of the Faith' handbooks... for Christians.

Catalogue: Word format e-mail
chris@home-school-supplies.co.uk

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NEW SPIRIT OF YOUTH NEW

DANCES OF UNIVERSAL PEACE

July 26th to August 4th

Family Camp

nr. Swanage Dorset

For full information send A5 SAE to:

**Pat Keirnan, 11 lime Tree Way,
Wellington, Telford TF1 3PJ**

Under 8's: £15 Under 18's: £30 Adults: £100

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 send (with any donation) to the advertising editor.

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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 858916 martine@open-education.org.uk**

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

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

Reading: Mondays, 10am - 12noon swimming at Central Pool, lots of teenagers

Contact: Lynn 0118 972 1420

Fridays, 11am -3pm-ish near Pangbourne for chat and play. Separate space for teenagers; adventure playground for younger ones, animals.

Contact: Lynda 0118 961 4466 or Abigail 01628 483895

E-mailing list for home educators in Berkshire and surrounding areas for events/activities

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BerkshireHomeEducators>

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

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

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

Contact: Audrey Hill 01480 219881

Peterborough weekly meetings on Wednesdays for art, craft, science, swimming, sports, play and visits.

Contact: Sarah 01733 265043 SJLambert@aol.com

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

CUMBRIA

Informal gatherings for socialising, 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

South Derby/N.W. Leics/E. Staffs: regular meetings, socialising and days out

Contact: Julie 01283 760800

DEVON

Contact: Becca 01404 549479 (East/Mid Devon)

Anne 01237 451535 (North Devon)

Sammy and Nick 01548 830716 (South Devon)

East and Mid Devon: Wednesday meetings:

11am - 1pm Exeter - activity sessions, e.g. science, craft, gardening, movement

2pm - 4pm Exeter - social gathering with optional activities (fortnightly from 6th March)

Contact Annie 01392 434167

10am - 12noon Aliphington - pottery (bring old apron/shirt) Contact: Becca 01404 549479

1pm - 3.30pm Crediton - social gathering (fortnightly from 13th March) 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

Penny 01626 360640 or 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 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

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

North Devon One-off social/outdoor games (teens
can explore 18 acres with fields, wood, streams)
Thursday 4 April, near Bideford. Also families meet
Atlantic Village (off A39, Bideford) in cafe/playpark
Tuesday 9 April 11am - 1-ish. Contact Anne Rix
01237 451535 - anne@annerix.demon.co.uk - for
directions/details. Let's meet and start something!

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: group with mainly
under 8s meet alternate Wednesdays St. Luke's Hall
Overton, with trips and activities between.

Contact: Michelle or Mark 07966 159017

Michelle.virgo@il2.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, alt. Mondays 1-5pm

Contact: Bernadette 01243 264837

Julie 023 92 64024, Val 01243 641221

HEREFORDSHIRE

1st Monday of the month for meetings various
venues. Contact: Kath and Malcolm 01432 830883

homed@apcs.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 pm.

Contact: Priscilla 01438 840674 olsandpjs@aol.com

Sandridge village hall, Sandridge, St Albans 2nd and

4th Thursdays, term time. 1-3pm

Contact: Carolyn 01727 851073

Melissa 01462 438577

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 Mackenzie,

16 Brambletree Cotts, Borstal, Rochester ME1 3TN

Bromley Contact: Claire 0181 460 7347

Claire@wadefamily99.freemove.co.uk

GCSE Science for HEers at West Kent College,

Tonbridge for 13+. Also practical electronics.

Contact: Kate 01732 458804

Katemorgan2000@yahoo.co.uk

S.E. Lond/Kent: new group at Ravensbourne Com-

munity Centre, Ravensbourne Est., Brangbourne Rd

Bromley, Every Tuesday 10-12 for support and

outings. Contact: Lorraine 0208 461 0885

(9-10am only please)

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

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
battleslake@clara.net
Fridays fortnightly at Sydenham 11.30-2.30
Contact: Chrystia and Keith 8776 8597
Fridays alternate fortnight at 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 for social and educational activities and visits
Contact: Clare Evans 0208 943 4491
Timesteps@altavista.co.uk
Lewisham EO group Thursdays weekly.
Contact: Clare 8333 9455
New group at Plumstead Common Adventure Playground SE18 alternate Fridays from 1st February, meeting at 12 noon.
Contact: Bev 0208 312 2160, Kim 0208 317 7262
East London/Essex: every Wednesday 2.30 - 4.30
The Exchange Mall, Ilford.
Contact: Maria 0208 270 5293
Jameson@maria.as

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 newssheet, 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

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 01603 738494

NORFOLK/SUFFOLK BORDER

Diss area Contact: Judith 01379 890622
Lowestoft area Contact: Lin 01502 741097

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

New activities/meetings being organised in addition to others already running.

Contact: Jane Newson 01536 418885

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 sessions, 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, alt. Fridays 9.30

-11.30 Shinewater Community Centre 75p per child.

Contact: Angelique 01323 509702

Worthing: Thursday morning group 10-12.30. Many different activities and outing last Thursday of each month. 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/trampoline 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.freemaps.co.uk

South Wales regular group activities and newsletter £3 pa. Weekly ice-skating.

Contact: Dawn 01452 540019

dawnandmike@cableinet.co.uk

Beverley 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 socialising. All welcome. Contact Penny 01922 745465

pennyclarke@homeschool.freemaps.co.uk

or Joy 0121 585 6450

JoyBeasley@b-bunch.freemaps.co.uk

Regular meeting Halesowen library 2nd Thursday meet in the coffee lounge 11-3

Contact: Joy 0121 585 6450

HELM newsletter: full details of regular meetings and events. £7.20 pa, contact Joy (as above)

WILTSHIRE

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

Regular meetings for arts/crafts, visits, swims, hanging out and more

Contact: Jo 01709 820866

Denise 01226 733478

Gary 0114 2585 702

Swimming fortnightly 2nd Tues. 12.00 Hillborough Leisure Centre and 4th Wed. 12.30 at Barnsley Metrodome

Contact: Ian 0114 281 7466

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, 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

*****STOP PRESS*****STOP PRESS*****

www.ordnance.survey.co.uk/freemapsfor11yearolds

register by 31 May - nag them to give us these too - at present only for schools!!! - Anne Rix

Gwersyll Dewi Sant St Davids Camp

Welcome to all home educating families. 20th - 30th June 2002

Pencarn farm St. Davids
Pembrokeshire

Important Booking Information.

This will be the 8th EO camp at the same beautiful coastal campsite with excellent facilities and fabulous scenery.

Unstructured camp, activities locally, communal space provided.

www.StDavidsCamp.co.uk

Bookings must be made in advance only

first come ... to a maximum of 50 families.

Booking fee of £1.50 per person forms the

Camp Fund which pays for communal expenses, admin, fire wood etc. This is a minimum, pay more if you can, refundable with cancellations **only** notified before 15th June. All people under 18 must be with a responsible adult. Badgers have been known to raid tents, bring secure food boxes. Boxes can be borrowed by public transport users for a returnable deposit.

Some static vans available phone for info (01239 851672). Vans have same site fee as camping (hook up £1 per night). Site fees: discounted for this camp, to be paid to the site on arrival. Per night: Adults (17+) £3, Children (6-16) £1.50, Dogs £1.50. You can come before 20th or stay after 30th and get this discount.

Book by post only before 15th June

1. State adults and children's names, address and phone number.
2. Send cheque for your booking fee payable to GDS or Giro transfer a/c 56 675 3081 (min £1.50 per person over 6)
3. State expected arrival date.
4. Enclose SAE for receipt and map.
5. £3 deposit of you want to borrow a badger proof food box.
6. If arriving by public transport please advise of expected arrival time if you wish to be picked up from bus or train.

**Send to: GDS, Ffynnonau Gleision,
Rhydlewish, Llandysul, Ceredigion
SA44 5SW**

PEAK CAMP 2002

5th -14th July

The camp is open to all EO members and to those interested in home-education.

Two large fields for tents and touring caravans; showers, toilets, wash basins and small shop.

Charges: per person per night

Adults: 1.50 Children: 0.80 Cars: 1.00

There is no need to book - families can make their stay as long or as short as they wish. Fees are payable direct to the farm, not to EO. However, it would be useful if I had an indication of the number of families coming that I could pass on to the farm.

There are no pre-organised activities. In the past, however, walks, cycle rides, rock climbing, circle dancing and shared meals have been popular activities. There are cycle hire centres and cycle tracks nearby as well as riverside walks. Offers of shared activities or workshops are generally welcome. There is always plenty of time to share experiences of home educating with other families, and for families and children to socialise freely.

The site is the usual one: Barracks Farm, Beresford Dale, near Hartington (grid reference 123 586). Hartington is approached by the A515 either from the north, via Buxton, or from the south, via Ashbourne. From the A515 take the B5054, signed to Hartington. Follow the road through and out of the village. Just under two miles out of the village, and shortly after entering Staffordshire, turn left, following signs for Beresford Dale. Keep following Beresford Dale signs until you near the end of the road; Barracks Farm is on the left.

Gary Podmore, 52 Rupert
Road, Sheffield S7 1RP.
Tel 0114 2585702

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)

EO Car Stickers

Help spread the word. Please send a reasonable 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

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

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

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 organisation.

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)

COUNCIL MEETING

There will be an open council meeting of Education Otherwise Association Ltd. on **Sunday 26th May starting at 10 a.m.** at Old Leake community centre in Lincolnshire. ALL EO members are welcome to attend. Why not make a weekend of it, and take time out to explore The Wash, and meet other home educators?

There are two caravan/ camp sites in the village; the White Hart (tel. 01205 870783), and the White Cat (Tel. 01205 870121).

For copies of the agenda, please contact the Chair; Jill Fisher.

For directions/ venue info. please contact the treasurer, Garry Humphreys; (phone no. and addresses inside back cover).

LEA/EA Contact group report

Background

The LEA/EA Contact group is a development of an earlier group called 'LEAP', its remit is to explore ways of improving communications with LEAs (in Scotland, EAs - please take 'LEA' in this report to include 'EA') as well as furthering their knowledge and understanding of home education and the support Education Otherwise offers to families. Although some information goes to all authorities on a national basis, and many families have direct input themselves, EO's Local Contact network are the front line people for much of our communications with LEAs. Therefore, the aim is to consider ways to enhance the excellent work that is already taking place by offering support to Local Contacts *who are able and willing to have direct LEA interactions and who would like assistance*. We also need to ensure that someone is available to communicate effectively with all LEAs and enable members to get the informed support they need. Feedback on the following ideas, especially from Local Contacts, is going to be essential.

Outline of what is needed

The LEA Contact group feels that the LEA work falls roughly into two categories:

- Proactive - establishing relationships with LEA officers, offering training and information sessions, working with LEAs on the literature they send out to home educators, working with them on their systems for dealing with home educators, as well as outreach work which could mean finding out about and attending meetings where contact with LEA personnel might be less official but often very productive.
- Reactive - supporting families in their relationships with LEAs at all levels. This would usually be by remaining in the background but sometimes by speaking to the LEA on behalf of the family or even involving specialist support.

The group acknowledges that these two types of work are enmeshed. On the one hand we feel that working with an LEA in a proactive way often provides influence that can help an EO member should a problem arise later. Conversely, by supporting a member locally, an opportunity can open up to carry out follow on work with an LEA to help them improve their knowledge, literature and systems. Nonetheless, Local Contacts *who do choose to work* with their LEA might not want to do both the proactive and the reactive work, preferring instead to do one or the other. Any mechanisms we put in place would need to acknowledge this and offer support for both types of work and all approaches.

The group recognised that not all LCs want to be involved in this work, particularly not when they first take on this role or do not feel they have adequate training or support.

Regional Support Network

With around 80 local contacts it is difficult for one person to be aware of which local contacts are working with their LEAs or to offer the support local contacts might need should they wish to expand their role into LEA work. Given this difficulty, the LEA contact group feels that we should set up a support network of people who could be directly available to Local Contacts and who could co-ordinate LEA work within a region. In addition, these 'Regional Support Coordinators' could ensure that Local Contacts who wanted support received whatever they needed in all aspects of their role, not just for LEA work. Established Local Contacts are often well networked and know who to go to with problems or queries, but new Local Contacts (and some of the others) are not always sure who to ask if they need help. A Regional Support Coordinator could provide a single point of contact for all Local Contacts in a region who would like this support. This would allow Local Contacts to feel supported while they build up their networks gradually. All the EO support people who currently offer help and information in particular areas (special needs, school phobia etc.) to members and active volunteers would continue to be available, but the proposed support network would also give each local contact a named support person for general support and information.

Proposed job description for Regional Support Coordinators

The Regional Support Coordinators would need to have experience of all aspects of Local Contact work, particularly with regard to LEA contact. The following is a list of ways they might help:

- provide support for a group of Local Contacts in carrying out any part of their role when asked to do so
- help new LCs become established in their job, and ensure they are aware of all channels for information such as the Newsletter and Bulletin
- ensure Local Contacts know about, and have access to, EO literature, legal summaries, and reports concerning EO's work such as with the DfES, Child Benefit etc.
- help LCs to network and possibly to deal with certain aspects of each other's work. It may be that the very effective informal buddying system between LCs that already takes place in many areas could be encouraged further
- develop and share a list of helpers that LCs can draw upon
- inform LCs in their region about decisions within the national organisation as well as encouraging participation in the process by explaining the system to new LCs
- work with Local Contacts in their region who want to expand into LEA work (reactive or proactive), either directly or by finding others to support them. Ideally, having a Regional Support Coordinator close by who would be able to support them in LEA work might encourage more Local Contacts to take on this important role
- find people to cover any aspect of LEA work which a Local Contact in their region does not wish to be involved with at that time. Thus there would always be someone available from EO to support families wanting help in their dealings or contact with their LEAs, as well as there being someone to do the proactive work with officers, including attending any meetings.
- *Perhaps* the Regional Support Coordinators would form their own mutual support network and work with each other, as well as any other members and Local Contacts who would like to contribute, in the preparation of materials and information sessions for LEAs. They could, if they wanted, produce guidelines for speaking to the authorities and collate sample letters to LEAs.

Significant features of the job would be to keep an overview of who is doing LEA contact work within the region, acting as a resource and coordinating support. The intention is not that the Regional Support Coordinators deal with everything that is 'left over' themselves. They would be there primarily to assist networking of help and be as involved as they feel able. All possible help would be available for them in turn to draw on, including from members of the LEA Contact group who would be happy to ensure support both for the proactive and reactive work as long as is needed. An e-mail list for ideas, queries, support, and the exchanging of information would also be useful for LCs and their regional supporters. Isobel is already in the process of setting up such a list.

The changed role of Local Contact support

If we do establish a network of Regional Support Coordinators, some of the responsibilities of the current national Local Contact Coordinator (Isobel) could be devolved to these people.

This sharing of responsibility for Local Contact support would make the role of the national LC Coordinator easier to manage. This is because the Regional Support network, with backup where required, would be actively offering the on-going support, reviewing of needs and resources etc. for Local Contacts. The national LC coordinator could concentrate on:

- Actively looking for new LCs and keeping proper records of names and details, updating and explaining the LC guidelines, making sure they have support from the Regional Support Coordinator or another named person, speaking to each LC prior to ratification, putting their names forward to the appropriate meeting, acting as a second line of support in case of difficulties and using questionnaires for feedback.

... cont'd overleaf - *more of your ideas wanted!*

Feedback on the group's proposal is *very* welcome. Likewise any other ideas about ways we might improve the support and information currently available to members, Local Contacts and LEAs. Feedback and ideas should be forwarded to the LEA/EA Contact group.

Jill Fisher is coordinating responses for the group so please contact her at: 54 Ratcliffe Road, Leicester LE2 3TD. Tel: 0116 2128120 Email: jill.fisher@care4free.net - or try **Gwen Baldock**, **Isobel Bogucki**, **Gary Podmore**, **Ann Samuel-Till**, **Anne Wade** or **Beverley Young**.

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## **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, Iris Harrison

**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**

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

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## **LOCAL CONTACT UPDATE**

### **New Acting Local Contacts**

|                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Northumberland | Maxine Roake    |
| Lancashire     | Louise Hardy    |
| Lancashire     | Angelika Wolter |

Dorset Paetra's new tel. No. 01305 756505  
Herts. Does anyone know what has become of the Local Contact??

### **Areas needing a Local Contact**

|                   |                            |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Bedfordshire      | Carmarthanshire            |
| Grampian          | Hertfordshire(?)           |
| Isle of Man       | London East                |
| Manchester South, | Strathclyde                |
| Tayside           | West Midlands - Birmingham |

Find out more from :-  
**Isobel Bogucki** 01403 261178

### **Help needed with LC list**

Do you enjoy keeping in touch with EO 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!*

**Isobel Bogucki** 01403 261178

## 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  
**Pam Bellinger** (Leicester) 0116 282 7929  
**Isobel Bogucki** (W. Sussex) 01403 261178  
**Penny Clarke** (W. Midlands) 01922 745465  
**Jill Fisher** (Leics) 0116 2128120  
**Lynda Hitchman** (Berkshire) 0118 961 4466  
**Jacqui Houlding** (Cheshire) 01925 654856  
**Garry Humphreys** (Lincs) 01205 871399  
**Celia McDonagh** (Wales) 0776 321 3851  
**Gary Podmore** (Yorks) 0114 2585702  
**Julie Ridley** (Manchester) 0161 860 7589  
**Ann Samuel Till** (Scotland) 0131 5566271  
**Jenny Stevens** (W. Sussex) 01243 783469  
**Dawn Waddington** (Bucks) 01908 569380  
**Anne Wade** (Middx) 0208 9047155  
**Ali Willer** (East Anglia) 01603 401020

### 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:** **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:** **Iris Harrison**  
01584 781341

**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

