

education otherwise



No. 149 - December 2002

**SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE EONL
TO THE FOLLOWING EDITORS:**

**REGIONAL DIARY, EO BUSINESS
AND ADVERTISEMENTS**

Please send direct to NL co-ordinator
(address inside back cover) Until further notice
Email: anne@annerix.demon.co.uk

BOOK AND SOFTWARE REVIEWS

SALLY HALL, NANT-Y-GAREG FARM,
SARON, LLANDYSUL, CARMARTHENSHIRE,
SA44 5EJ. 01559 370908
sally@aecb.net

HOME EDUCATION in the NEWS

ANN KENNEDY-SMITH,
21 KIMBERLEY ROAD, CAMBRIDGE
CB4 1HG. 01223 356627
akennedysmith@yahoo.co.uk

ARCHIVE SELECTIONS

SARAH GUTHRIE. 01379 783678
(*NOT for back copies of NLS - see Publications, inside back cover*)

SPECIAL SECTION - April

more on LEA/EA contacts ... (by 20th Feb.)
Jo Borthen jo4eo@aol.com 01392 679499
57 Florida Drive, Exeter, EX34 5EX
(*Ideas and volunteers for future welcome*)
(*NB no SS in Feb. - Research Supplement*)

LETTERS AND ARTICLES

SUE WHITE, 2 PRETORIA VILLAS
EYE ROAD, BROME, EYE, SUFFOLK IP23 8AL
01379 870036
Sue_white@lineons.net

CHILDREN'S PAGES:

Amie Borthen, 57 Florida Drive, Exeter,
EX34 5EX Tel. 01392 679499
Email: amie4amity@aol.com
(*N.B. deadline 20th December 2002*)
(*earlier than main NL*)

DEADLINE FOR THE FEBRUARY ISSUE IS 1ST JANUARY 2003

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 membership is up to date.

Please send contributions via the most appropriate section editor above

DISCLAIMER

The opinions in this publication are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the editors, nor of Education Otherwise as a whole. This newsletter is edited by volunteers and its primary purpose is to provide support and communication between members.

All contributions (including advertisements) have been accepted in good faith and have not been in any way endorsed by Education Otherwise, which cannot be held responsible for the consequences of responding to any of them.

EDITORIAL POLICY

EO is legally responsible for the material printed in the Newsletter, and sometimes it is necessary to edit letters and articles to ensure that there is no possibility of legal action against EO. We try to consult with authors when this is necessary but we reserve the right not to print anything we consider puts EO at risk.

COPYRIGHT

Any item published in this newsletter may be reprinted in other home education magazines in the UK or abroad or on the Internet. If you do not want your contribution reproduced without your consent, please state clearly that you wish to retain the copyright.

**IF YOU CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL OR OTHER DETAILS,
OR IF YOUR NEWSLETTER DOES NOT ARRIVE
PLEASE CONTACT THE ADMINISTRATOR (See inside back cover)**

CONTENTS

	PAGE
BOOK REVIEWS AND RESOURCES ..	2
ARCHIVES (Reviews)	9
SPECIAL SECTION ~ LEAs	10
HOME EDUCATION RESEARCH ..	15
AGM/GATHERING ~ Manorbier ..	16
EO AND CHANGE.. .. .	17
COUNCIL BUSINESS	18
RESOURCES	19
EDUCATING ARCHIE	21
NATIONAL EXTENSION COLLEGE ..	22
HIGHLAND HOME EDUCATORS.. ..	24
SCOTLAND ~ National Debate ..	26
~ Meeting with Scot. Exec. ..	28
LETTERS PAGES	29
ARTICLES ~ Pre-16s & college ..	33
~ GCSEs	33
~ Beachcombing	35
~ Home Ed. 'Warts and All' ..	37
ADVERTISEMENTS	40
REGIONAL DIARY	42
EO ADS	47

Thanks to Gregory for front cover (more needed for February, April . . .) and to Dan for technical support.

Co-ordinatorial

If this issue of the NL is late, disorganised or otherwise not up to scratch - it really isn't due to any of our EO team. The storms in mid-October knocked out my computer, and a cow trod on the junction box for the telephone line (again!) somewhere in the field above the house. BT took over a week to get around to fixing it; in the process, they cut off my neighbours' telephone - and kept them waiting several more days to be reconnected. How helpless I felt when deprived of the technology I've got used to using! It took Technical Support Son three days of taking the computer to bits and putting it together again to repair the damage and get everything working as it should. I had to splash out on a new modem - somehow that has ended up in his computer, and I've got his old one ... oh well, it's worth it! If he hadn't been around (and quite possibly if he hadn't been allowed to follow his own inclinations as regards education) the situation would probably have been financially crippling - not to mention devastating to the production of this issue of the NL! As it is, I'm running out of time and space, so the rest of this page is taken up with things I couldn't fit in anywhere else ...

Anne 17.11.2

University of Durham Home Education Research

With the next newsletter members will receive a copy of Paula Rothermel's 'working paper' that reports the research carried out for her PhD thesis; many EO members participated in her investigations. Paula has been working on this for several years and has always said she would feed back her results through the EO newsletter. She has suggested that all EO members should receive a copy of the paper so that it can be utilised by people who might find it helpful - here's a taster of the findings:

"The home-educated children demonstrated high levels of attainment and good social skills ... Home educating parents fulfil two separate 'professional' roles - as parents and educators ... the concept of 'taking responsibility' and home-educating rather than accepting state provision, challenges us to consider how far we should go in accepting the 'informed wisdom' of the school norm."

This should be a useful tool in communicating with officials! We look forward to hearing more about the work and how it was carried out in the next newsletter.

Anne Rix

NB see also Pam Vickers' request for help with a survey of EO members (p.15) ...

NATIONAL GATHERING & COUNCIL MEETING

Manorbier Youth Hostel

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

**Thursday January 23rd to Sunday
26th January 2003**

For information & booking form
either send SAE to

Yvette Hartley, 17 Maes Ingli, Newport,
Pembrokeshire, SA42 0TE
or email to yeh@onetel.net.uk

PLACES LIMITED - BOOKINGS ONLY

BOOK & CD REVIEWS

Festivals Family and Food

by Diana Carey and Judy Large

In an age where Christmas appears in the shops towards the end of September, and Easter similarly appears soon after New Year, there is clearly a desperate longing in many people's hearts to celebrate more festivals if only we knew how. This book satisfies that longing. It is a delightful compilation listing eighteen separate festivals, such as Mothering Sunday, Whitsun and Martinmas, with a chapter of songs, poems, stories, recipes and craft ideas devoted to each. Many of the ideas are very beautiful in their simplicity, such as sticking pins in conkers to make chairs and tables for the dolls' house, and gathering sheep's wool from the fences to use as stuffing for simple dolls. Others such as weaving salt dough into May baskets are more taxing. All are very rewarding, bringing us back into touch with the natural seasonal cycle of life. The origin of each festival is explained, together with the traditional activities for that time of the year. There are also chapters on extra topics such as Birthdays, Hungry Teatimes and Herbs. This is an appealing book with a rustic feel. The girls dived into it immediately. Claudia was delighted to find music and clapped every single song through. The black and white sketches are plentiful, adding interest to the text and illustrating the crafts and finished recipes. There is so much information and so many ideas jam-packed into this book that I have no hesitation in recommending it to any family.

Vivienne Hughes with Stephanie (10), Claudia (9) and Lucy (5)
£10.99 ISBN 0 950706 23X Hawthorn

Note: Hilary Woolfe (with her son Isaac 2), a new EO member, also sent me a similar review of this book concluding "I'm sure over the years my copy will get plenty of use, and there is something to interest any age. It's a book well worth buying as a resource book".

Celebrating Christmas Together

by Estelle Bryer and Janni Nicol

This book gives ideas for the real celebrating of Christmas in the style used by Waldorf (Steiner) Schools. The mood is gradually built through Advent using a Crib Scene that changes day by day, starting with the stars in the sky, and ending when the baby is placed in the crib on Christmas morning. Details are given for the making of the figures from simple materials such as pipe cleaners and wool.

The Nativity Story is given in verse form to be used as a stand-alone story, or as a narrative to a mimed play or puppet play. Stage directions are given, as are suggestions for props and costumes. There are traditional songs with music, as well as some songs I had not heard before. There is a separate Three Kings play for use during Epiphany (starts 6th

Jan) in the same way. There are also a selection of Christmas Stories such as The Story of the Rosebush, in which a rosebush enlists the help of fairies to give its roses to the baby Jesus, to be told and retold during the Christmas period. The girls are all very keen on building the Crib Scene during Advent. The ideas in this book are very flexible, and I can see that I will be referring to it often in the build up to Christmas, helping us remember its true meaning.

Vivienne Hughes with Stephanie (10), Claudia (9) and Lucy (6)
£9.99 ISBN 1 903458 20X Hawthorn

Christmas Stories Together

by Estelle Bryer and Janni Nicol

This is a wonderful book for the 3-9 age group and an ideal accompaniment to *Celebrating Christmas Together* (see review above). It successfully weaves a pattern of delightful, gentle and touching stories over the Advent period and twelve days of Christmas. These are the kind of stories that celebrate the true Christmas and are best read aloud. They can easily be remembered for future telling, with your own embellishments if you like.

Sally Hall with Keith (8)
£9.99 ISBN 1 903458 22 6 Hawthorn

Animal Fair by Anthony Browne

This is an amazing book, full of pop-ups and flaps to lift, incorporated into exciting pictures to accompany the very catchy song, 'I went to the Animal Fair' which Celeste and Ivo love to sing. It takes us a long time to finish the song as there is so much to look at before we turn the page. It's the most entertaining pop-up book we've ever read and would make a brilliant gift - although perhaps a bit fragile for the under 3s. It has wide appeal and is already a big favourite with us. A special book to read and sing together.

Kirsten Freiesleben with Celeste (4) and Ivo (2)
£12.99 ISBN 0 7445 8829 4 Walker Books

The Works 2 Brian Moses and Pie Corbett

This is listed as a book of poems for every occasion and on every subject and it appears to be just so. I really enjoyed the poems. Some of them are funny and some play about with words that make you think about spelling. I particularly liked the poems in a section headed 'personal, social and sensitive issues'. These poems deal with things children go through but do not like talking about. It even deals with bullying. All in all a book which makes you look at letters and words and meanings of words. It gives you ideas which you can then use to write your own poetry. It is a good value book of over 450 pages. All are poems that you can relate to in life.

Francesca Houghton (12)
£5.99 ISBN 0 330 39902 0 Macmillan

Some new titles for Christmas

Willow at Christmas by Camilla Ashforth (£6.99 ISBN 0 7445 8841 3 Walker Books) is for the younger reader. It is a nicely illustrated book about animals celebrating Xmas on Paradise Farm.

'*Twas the Night Before Christmas* (£10.99 ISBN 0 7636 1585 4 Walker Books) or using its other title 'Account of a Visit from St Nicholas' is beautifully presented in this new book using the original wording for the well known, old Christmas poem. There are ghostly black and white drawings on every page that add atmosphere to the words.

Christmas in Exeter Street by Diana Hendry (£4.99 ISBN 0 7445 9417 0 Walker Books) is an amusing story about a family house that welcomes so many guests on Christmas Eve it is full to bursting with the visitors sleeping in some very unusual places. Will Santa Claus find everyone? The illustrations, by John Lawrence, are hilarious.

The Walker Book of Christmas Stories (£3.99 ISBN 0 7445 8291 1) is very good value. It contains 10 stories by different authors (including *Christmas in Exeter Street*). There are many black and white illustrations and the stories are all very different and suitable for a wide age range.

The Voyage of the Arctic Tern

by Hugh Montgomery

This is a fantastic book. It would make a great gift for a birthday or Christmas and I think every public library should have one. Admittedly I am slightly biased because I love poetry, but even for anyone who doesn't rate poetry it is great to read because of the story itself. I was born in Torbay, Devon; that is fairly close to Plymouth so I could recognise a lot of the parts of that City that the author mentions. It was fun to read about these places in a story that begins thousands of years ago. The story is an adventure built around a legend. It tells of one man, Captain Bruno, who betrays all his friends in his village that lies in the frozen north. For this he receives a punishment of eternal life until he succeeds in three tasks: saving a life; saving someone who has been betrayed; and finally giving away a great wealth. It then becomes a story of good over evil and Bruno sails through an adventure on his ship, The Arctic Tern. He saves a man from drowning who then goes on to help him save the King of Spain from betrayal. It is very difficult to put down in a few words the immense excitement of this book. It is the sort of book you go on and on about to your friends!! I have already! The story is great. The pictures are all drawn in black and made ghostly - I can only end as I began - a fantastic book that I would recommend to anyone.

Francesca Houghton (12)

£12.99 ISBN 0 7445 9251 8 Walker Books

A Selection from the Canterbury Tales

Retold by Selina Hastings, this book contains seven of Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales in modern day English. The introduction sets the historical scene of how a group of strangers in the Middle Ages came to be thrown together on a pilgrimage to Canterbury. It also gives some background to the writing of the *Canterbury Tales*. The first page describes how the pilgrims met in a London public house at the start of their pilgrimage. They were set a challenge to each tell a story on route, with a free meal to the winner.

The rest of the book introduces each storyteller in turn followed by his or her story. The style is straightforward, easy to follow and very entertaining. An important part of the book is the illustrations by Reg Cartwright, which help to set the atmosphere of the stories. At the end of the book is a very useful index stating the characters involved in each story and where it takes place. I would recommend it for 8+.

Matt Longmuir (13)

£7.99 0 7445 8963 0 Walker Books

Touch the Sky, Touch the Universe TLC Kids Zone, The Discovery Series

With so many cd-roms amounting to little more than books on disc, this was a refreshing change. The easy to use control panel allowed for great interaction, with the planets viewable from the earth, the sun, and in their places in the solar system. The 3D effects were stunning, virtual reality at its best, and immediately gained the viewer's attention. The continuity was good too, with information easily accessed on individual planets from every screen. The depth of information meant it could be adapted to a wide age range. Oliver picked out the clarity of explanation as a highlight, along with the graphics, finding it easy to understand and well presented. I could moan about the American accents and spelling, but this program is so good it's forgiven.

Gill Humphreys with Oliver (8)

£12.99 Mindscape

The Ropemaker by Peter Dickinson

Tilja, Tahl and their grandparents, Meena and Alnor set off to find the great magician - Faheel, to bring the magic back to The Valley. They go through the Empire, visiting many places, falling into trouble and meeting lots of people, some that are powerful magicians. When they find Faheel, he goes to the Emperor's palace and destroys it, including the Emperor. This weakens his powers, so he sends Tilja and Tahl to find a man called the Ropemaker, who in the end brings back all the magic to The Valley. I found this book fairly interesting, but not that exciting, as the storyline didn't get me wondering what happens next. I think this book would be suitable for boys and girls from the age of 11 upwards.

James Baker (10)

£12.99 ISBN 0 333 94738 X MacmillanParty

Girls Special Caz's Confetti Crisis

by Jennie Walters

This book is about 6 girls. Caz's dad is going to be married and he wants Caz and her step sister to be bridesmaids but her bossy stepmother wants her to dress up as Little Bo Beep, in a horrid dress; but then her best friend Lauren sat on the dress so she had to iron it, only she burns a hole in the dress and Harriet, her stepsister, throws up all over hers!! But her friends come and bring the dress of her dreams, so they get married after all. The best bit was when Lauren burnt the hole in the dress - it was ridiculously funny!!

Lizzie Howell (10)

£3.99 ISBN 0 3408 5413 8

The Animal Boogie

by Debbie Harter (includes Audio CD)

I defy anyone not to dance to this incredibly swingly, swingly boogie, or not to be dazzled by the riot of colour in this attractive book. Each verse is given its own brightly coloured double-page spread - as we journey through the jungle meeting various animals that stomp, flap, slither and so on. The happy children on each page are wearing clothes in the same bright tones as the friendly animals they are meeting. The accompanying free CD is ten minutes long, consisting of a light-hearted introductory tune, followed by *The Animal Boogie* sung by children's singer Fred Penner, followed by an instrumental version which can be sung along to without Fred's lead. There is so much scope here for audience participation. We can all stomp, flap and slither, as well as sing, shake shakers or clap to the catchy rhythm. The music for the tune is given at the back of the book, and is simple enough to be played on recorder or any other instrument a child (or adult!) might be learning. I had a lot of fun with my three children and this Boogie, and am looking forward to trying it with a larger group at some stage.

Vivienne Hughes with Stephanie (10), Claudin (9) and Lucy (6).
£5.99 ISBN 1 84148 914X Barefoot Books

70 Songs for the Early Years; Start with a Song by Mavis de Mierre

This is a book really for someone who is better on the piano than I and more prepared to put in the time for preparation. You do need to be familiar with each song before involving the children who soon drift off to do other things if not. However, we shall persevere as the songs are fun and I think Gwenan may enjoy picking out the notes and writing her own songs once we have used it more. Ideal for groups of children aged 2 - 5 with a lot of suggestions for activities and a wealth of advice on singing and music with small children.

Susan Bain with Ceri (4 and Gwenan (8)

ISBN 1 897675 75 5 Brilliant Publications

The Birthday Presents

By Paul Stewart and Chris Ridell

Another 'happy ending' story of Rabbit and Hedgehog for the 2 - 6 age range. This time they are swapping birthday presents. However, being very different creatures with very different habits, they don't get it quite right. Luckily they both find a practical use for their gifts and they can sincerely thank each other. I particularly liked the atmosphere captured by the illustrations and there are significant lessons to be learnt of friendship.

Caroline Farquar with Leo (3)

£4.99 1 84270 035 9 Andersen

Yoga for Children from Words of Discovery

Fly Like a Butterfly is a lovely book. The yoga positions are made into stories so it is more like a game rather than just performing the moves. Also in the back of the book it gives ideas for meditations, for example one to help with getting rid of angry feelings. The pictures, however, did not capture Rowan's imagination, as they were black and white photographs but the style and concept of the book made up for this. (£10.99 ISBN 9 0 915801 84 1) *Imagine That* is our favourite. It is more child-friendly due to its colourful illustrations, which Rowan copied with ease. The poems with each position give a feeling for the position and the detailed description tells you how to perform the move. This book is ideal for explaining the reasons for doing yoga and an idea behind each position. This book makes yoga fun and had easy to remember sequences. We would recommend it strongly to anyone considering doing yoga with children.

Kathleen Smith with Rowan (4)

(£11.99 ISBN 0 932040 40 3)

Shakespeare's Storybook

retold by Patrick Ryan

Many of Shakespeare's plays were based on folk and fairy tales. Patrick Ryan, a professional storyteller, explores seven of Shakespeare's plays: *The Taming of the Shrew, Romeo and Juliet, The Merchant of Venice, As You Like It, Hamlet, King Lear and The Winter's Tale*. He explains the background to each play, before telling his version of the related tale. These tales are beautifully told and the book is nicely illustrated. The folk tales have been painstakingly researched and there is a very full bibliography at the back giving sources for the tales in general, information about Shakespeare's plays and individual sources for each of the stories.

This book would make a very nice gift and would suit anyone eight and over.

Clare Crane with Natasha (7)

£14.99 Barefoot Books

Clottus and the Ghostly Gladiator, Twitta and the Ferocious Fever, both by Ann Jungman

These fictional accounts of family life in the Roman times combine fun stories with useful information about slavery and Roman culture in a light hearted and entertaining way. The books provide a good starting point for discussions about notions of 'right' and 'wrong' and changing social attitudes for older children, whilst providing interesting reading material for younger readers. About *Clottus*, Holly says "I liked it because it was a good story. It was about a slave who ran away to be a gladiator". On *Twitta* she says, "It was about a little girl who got ill. She got better at last." Holly thinks other children of her age and older will enjoy these books and I agree.

They provide a very good introduction to Roman history, but their subject matter may upset younger, or very sensitive children.

Karen McIntyre with Holly (5)

£4.99 each ISBN 0713605962.9 (*Twitta*) ISBN 07136 5958.0 (*Clottus*) A & C Black

Macbeth by William Shakespeare

There are several different titles in this series of classic stories. Each includes a book and accompanying CD. We found the text and CD rather basic: no video images, no speech so a lot of reading, questions in test section unchanging, but with some background info and good cross referencing.

The "Time Line" of Shakespeare's life was the most interesting thing on the CD ROM, but little to do with *Macbeth*. I don't think any one would find it interesting to use on its own without a video of the play alongside (even the BBC Schools' TV animation that we use) it may be better to have the CD rather than a plain text, but not much...

Yvette Hartley with Erin (12)

£4.99 ISBN 1-85326-035-5 *Wordsworth Classics*

Eric and the Voice of Doom

by Barbara Mûchelhill

Although intended to be read alone, this book is suitable for reading together, with fun illustrations on each page. It is about a young boy whose mother has another baby. The baby turns out to have special powers and interferes quite dramatically with his own life, which involves a lot of school and his own band. His best friend has two very normal and very irritating younger sisters. A refreshing way of dealing with what can be a sensitive subject. Amber enjoyed the story immensely. The humour really appealed to her and she seems to have remembered lots of funny details a few weeks after reading it. It is a great book and I'm pleased to see there are more books about Eric.

Caroline Farquar with Amber (5)

£3.99 ISBN 1 84270 108 8 *Andersen*

Adventures in Ancient Greece by Linda Bailey

When the three Binkerton children want to go somewhere they visit the Good Times Travel Agency, where something always goes wrong! They want to see the next Olympic games, but as Libby, the youngest, causes everything to fall down or get broken, it's rather hard to explain where they want to go. So instead of going into the future, they are sent back in time to Ancient Greece where the first Olympic Games were held! The Binkertons have to read every word in their guidebook to finish their journey, and they get into lots of trouble. In the days of Ancient Greece, women were considered not important and rather stupid. They were not allowed to vote, go to parties, be in the Olympics or even watch the Olympics! This makes Emma very cross, and they have to make Libby and Emma look like boys. Josh has to stand on Emma's shoulders and pull his clothes over her; when she peeps through the clothes she sees that all the Olympic athletes are naked! The children learn lots about Ancient Greece and have a big adventure too, especially when Libby takes part in the chariot race! We liked this book a lot.

Tricia Onions (10)

£9.99 ISBN 0 7136 6339 1 A & C Black

Jay Jay the Jet Plane CD ROM 3 - 7 years

Anthea was excited to try Jay Jay the Jet Plane CD-ROM as she enjoys the television programme. The graphics are good and the software is easy to use. There are six games in total which the player needs to complete in order to help Jay Jay and his friends get all the right items so that they can make the Sparkleberry Tree sparkle again. There are three levels of difficulty for each game and the player can move from one to the other at any time. The CD-ROM covers recognition of letters of the alphabet, knowledge of alphabetic order, matching colours, shapes and letters. The activities themselves, though, were fairly pointless - such as clicking on the same letter that is being called out, or clicking on a colour that is being called out. The same type of activity is repeated many times and a player has to wait for the response by Jay Jay or his friends before clicking the mouse again and is therefore not able to work through anything at speed. It is also trying to educate children about environmental issues. When a player clicks on a question mark a woman appears on the screen to chat about such things as the relationship between planes and air, and about plants and seeds. This part seemed out of place on this activity software and it seemed to have very little environmental education value. There was not very much to do for each activity and it did not take long for Anthea to complete it. She did not particularly enjoy this CD-ROM and it is not one she would want to do again.

Clare Crane with Anthea (6)

Mindscape

The Doll by Cora Taylor

This book is about a girl called Meg. She gets rheumatic fever and goes to her grandmother's house. Meg gets given a doll called Jessie by her Grandmother. (Jessie is also called the invalid doll because she is only given to sick children). The doll belonged to Meg's great-grandmother. When Meg goes to sleep holding the doll she wakes up on a hill, in a meadow, in Victorian times. While there she meets a family and she gets called Morag. At first she is bewildered, but then she realises they are talking to her. When she goes to sleep holding the doll again in Victorian times, she wakes up in her Grandmother's house. The next time Meg wakes up as Morag she is given more jobs and works out that in her family there are: Papa, the father; Mother; Archie, the oldest boy; Gordie, the youngest boy; Lizzie the youngest girl and her, Morag. Meanwhile Meg's mother and father are getting a divorce and life is turning chaotic. Meg uses the doll to escape to her other happy family, but as Meg's life goes on the dream turns into a nightmare. There is a huge prairie fire and Meg and Lizzie are left behind. When at last they reach a fort, Morag dies and Meg cannot escape to her other world any more. When Meg and her Grandmother look through the family albums there are lots of pictures of Morag and her family. Afterwards Meg and her Grandmother visit Morag's grave. I enjoyed this book a lot and after I had finished I wanted to read more about Morag and Meg and what happened to them. It is written fantastically and is extremely gripping. I could not put it down at some points because it was so exciting.

Molly Whitehall (9)

£4.99 ISBN 0 86315 407 7 Floris Books

Zoobinis Maths Journey

The Zoobinis are going on a journey from Zoobinis Isle to another land and they need help to solve the puzzles on the way. This is a similar layout to Zoobinis Mountain Rescue. The twelve activities are fun to do. There are four levels of difficulty, which enables this software to be enjoyed by six-year-olds through to adults. (I like the names of the levels of difficulty - Not So Easy; Oh So Hard; Very Hard; Very, Very Hard) The activities develop mathematical thinking skills. The player often has to solve a problem by organising the Zoobinis into ones with similar traits, then as the player progresses within a game he/she has to analyse what is working and what is not and develop strategies and test theories. To complete a game takes many sessions but after three activities the Zoobinis get to a resting place where they can be safely left and will remain there until the player next resumes the game. Several players can have games stored at the same time. Natasha likes this CD-ROM and I can imagine it being enjoyed for many years.

Clare Crane with Natasha (7) *Mindscape*

Wonderful Me! by Margaret Mahy

A great book - a collection of poems and stories about witches, mermaids, dragons, a boy who plays the violin, a girl who finds a dinosaur egg, and a letter which travelled around the world. In total there are 13 stories and 15 poems. My favourite story is the Tick Tock party. It is about a surprise party for a sad rocking horse who is very old. His dearest wishes come true when he almost becomes a new horse. One of the stories is called Teddy and the Witches. The witches turn everything strange, such as cows become elephants, and there is mayhem. My favourite poem is called *The Bush Wedding*. It is about birds who help to get ready for a wedding. All the stories are exciting and have different themes. Some are adventures, some are magical, some are mysterious. I reckon that people who believe in magic should read this book and anyone else who likes the sound of it! When I first saw the book, I grinned and dived in. I couldn't stop reading!

Karis Youngman (8)

£4.99 ISBN 1 84255 091 8 Dolphin

Nightland by Robert Dodds

This thrilling story is about a girl, Claire, and a boy, Aidan, who meet each other at midnight on Crows Wood Lane to go into another world - The Nightland. Here they meet a three-headed dog, wraiths, which are ghost-like people who disappear when you get near them, two Australians, a dodgy ferryman and a girl called Dicie Ravenscroft. If you stay past moonset, Reapers - dark servants of the king of the Nightland, will come and cut you down. When this happens you will have to stay in the Nightland for ever. One time Aidan goes alone and doesn't come back. He is found on Crows Wood Lane in a coma. Claire goes on a daring rescue mission with her little brother, Ben, into the Nightland to get Aidan's spirit and bring it back to his real body to save him from dying. This story was so good I read it in one day! I recommend this for boys and girls of eleven years and over.

James Baker (10)

£4.99 ISBN 1 84270 081 2 Andersen

Happy Mouseday by Dick King Smith

George says "This book is about Pete who would love a pet mouse. His mum and dad won't let him have one. Pete has an idea - he buys his own mouse and keeps it in his tree house. It's a funny story and has a nice ending." Leanne says "We love the *Corgi Pups* books. The text is a nice size for any reader and there are nice illustrations. George loves the fact that they have chapters. They are good value and with lots of titles to choose from they are great for new readers who want to read 'real' books".

Leanne with George Osgerby (6)

£3.50 ISBN 0 5525 2820 X *Corgi Pups*

Sisters of the Quantock Hills

by Ruth Elwin Harris

There are four different titles in this series that is reminiscent of *Little Women*. It is a compelling saga of the lives and loves of four sisters and their diverse relationships with the neighbouring Mackenzie family who take charge of the sisters when their mother dies. The writing is vivid, descriptive and imaginative, at times emotional. Each of the four books is the story of one of the sisters, exploring their life, emotions and feelings, commencing with Sarah's story, (*The Silent Shore* ISBN 0 7445 8284 9). Sarah is the youngest Purcell who was only eight years old when her mother dies. *The Beckoning Hills* (ISBN 0 7445 8283 0) is Frances' story, a committed and dedicated artist who likes to control, she is the eldest of the sisters. Julia's story (*The Dividing Hills*, ISBN 0 7445 8285 7) concentrates on her time as a volunteer nurse in France during the Great War. The final story is Gwen's who is passionate about gardening (*Beyond the Orchard House*, ISBN 0 7445 8286 5). Excellent value and a very enjoyable read for the older child or adult. £4.99 each *Walkers Books*

Are You Sitting Comfortably?

Story poems chosen by Brian Moses

This book is a selection of all Brian's favourite poems (from different authors (including himself!)) all in one book! It is a book of story-comedy poems, mostly poems with simple scenarios (e.g. a school trip, a witch with a broken broomstick or the 3 little pigs) turned into something hilariously funny and entertaining. There are 36 poems and each poem is usually between 2 to 3 pages long (although sometimes only half the page is used). Being by different authors all the poems are good and none made just to make the book bigger. Sometimes they have black/white. Both my mum and I loved this book and I would recommend it 5ish +.

By Matt Longmuir (13)

£3.99 ISBN 0 330 39704 4 *Macmillans*

Last Seen Wearing Trainers by Rosie Rushton.

It is difficult to classify this book, at it was dramatic, sad, and disturbingly true to life! Katie Fordyce, a 15-year-old teenager, is having a rough time. Not only has she got an "intellectually challenged" little brother, her mother beats her, and her father has recently committed suicide. So when she meets Joe, who offers to take her "away from it all" she jumps at the chance. But Joe changes his plans; he dumps her at a run down, forgotten cottage, and abuses her! Then he reveals a family secret, which threatens to change their lives for ever! I enjoyed this story for lots of different reasons, but I especially like the layout of the book, (which is very original) as each chapter is seen through a different character's eyes! Megan Whiteman (12)

£9.99 ISBN 1 84270 065 0 *Andersen Press*.

Poems For Year 4: Every Kind Of Poem You Will Ever Need Chosen by Pie Corbett

This is a book in a series of poetry books for years 3,4,5 and 6. I didn't enjoy this poetry book much. I don't know whether it was because I am outside the age range it is intended for but this book had poems (written by different people) that weren't very interesting. They seemed to be dull and not much to them. I have a lot of poetry books as I like poetry and the books I have all have poems that are interesting and mostly funny. I have not read any of the other books in the series but I hope they are not like this one and have better poems. I wouldn't recommend this book to anyone but if you do want to read it then I suggest it for ages 8-11.

Simon Hoggarth (14)

£3.99 ISBN 0 330 48289 0 *Macmillan*

Science Experiments (8-10) by Tricia Dearborn

This book contains 24 sheets, each containing one experiment, divided into the four KS2 categories of science. There is also a list, at the beginning, of equipment and materials. Most of the equipment and materials would be found in any home, so it would be easy to gather the things needed for any particular experiment. The book is clearly laid out. On the other hand, some of the experiments we would tend to carry out in a more organic and holistic fashion. For example, the life processes section suggests observing animals and their habitats and examining root systems. We do this as a natural part of tending our garden and pets!! There are also school references throughout and as is often the case with such books, the section on parental involvement is very patronising. The sheets are in large print with lots of space for writing up the experiments - this is probably unnecessary in an HE environment. However, the activity pages are photocopiable so that you could use them in a local HE group situation. In summary, we thought the book was rather expensive for what it contains. We also have the Usborne Big Book of Experiments, which is cheaper and much better value as it has about 90 pages of experiments.

Shena Deauchars with Katherine (10) and James (8)

£12.99 ISBN 0 7136 6348 0 *A&C Black*

Skulduggery in the South Atlantic

by Duncan Watt (*Wallace Boys Series*)

I liked this book even better than *Trouble in Tristan* I reviewed in the last issue because there is lots of information at the end telling you all about the island of St Helena where the story is set. It is a very exciting story and my favourite part is when Nigel, Bruce and Jimmy discover that there is an impostor in place of the governor of the island, Sir William Wallace, Nigel and Bruce's uncle.

Kit Freiesleben (9)

£4.99 ISBN 1 85646 110 6 *Gazelle*

Christie's Old Organ by O.F. Walton

This is a very old book written about 150 years ago. This edition was published in 1999 and was slightly updated. I found it useful as a piece of social history because it made me realise how poor people were in those days. This is a moralistic book and I have to admit that I found it extremely boring, as I am sure that most children of today would. The story is about a young orphan boy (Christie) who makes friends with an old man who is dying. They live together in the man's old attic room. Every day Christie takes out an old barrel organ belonging to the man, which he plays to people to earn money. He makes friends with a young girl called Mabel who is kind to him. Most of the book is very sad and keeps talking about going to heaven when you die. Eventually, the old man and Mabel's mother die on the same day. Christie grows up and works for the Church. It is difficult to know what age group would enjoy this book. Perhaps some adults might like it.

Simon Hoggarth (13)

£3.99 ISBN 185792523 8 Christian Focus

Scottish Poems chosen by John Rice

These poems would appeal more to older teenagers or adults. There is a section of poems in Gaelic. Some of the poems are humorous in that they are written in 'Scottish' and so when you read them aloud it makes you sound Scottish! Most of the poems are what I would term as 'heavy going'. Its appeal would be mainly to those people interested in Scotland (which is a great place, I should know - I live there!).

Francesca Houghton (12)

£4.99 ISBN 0330 48026 X Macmillan

Babies Need Books by Dorothy Butler

Steve says "The sub title is *sharing the joy of books with your child from birth to six*. This sums it up. *Books can be bridges between children and parents and children and the world*. Butler describes how reading to small children helps to strengthen the bond between parent and child, by being a 'special' activity for both of them. Continuing as the child grows helps stimulate and enhance the development of language. Ultimately the child would understand that language could be represented by abstract symbols and go on to learn to read. Butler deals with each year of a child's life, from birth to six and gives an extensive list of recommended books. We have read some of these to Thomas (4): we have all enjoyed them hugely and look forward to trying more. Some titles are out of print, but the local library may be able to help. The edition I borrowed from the library was revised in 1995 so it is not up to date. However it is not out of date

Steve Green

£8.99 ISBN 0 14 0156 79 8 Penguin Books

Note

Prices quoted are the publishers' recommended retail prices (rrp). Shop around for lower prices - try discount book shops, mail order discount book clubs and the internet. Contact details from publishers are set out below but many titles can be ordered from your local bookshop. *The Book People* (tel. 0870 6077780 or visit www.thebookpeople.co.uk) is a good, economical source for books. It is NOT a book club and you order what you like, when you like (at prices well below publisher's rrp). Postage/packing is usually free on order over £25 but if you are ordering less tell them you are home educating and you will be able to get a discount rate.

CONTACTS

A & C Black 01480 212666

Andersen Press 020 7840 8701

www.andersenpress.co.uk

Barefoot Books 01225 322400

www.barefootbooks.co.uk

Brilliant Publications 01525 222844

www.brilliantpublications.co.uk

Christian Focus Publications

www.christianfocus.com

Dolphin (Orion) 0207 520 4318

www.orionbooks.co.uk

Floris (Scottish Book Service) 0870 240 2182

Gazelle 01524 68765

www.gazellebooks.co.uk

Hawthorne Press 01453 757040

www.hawthornpress.com

Macmillan Children's Books 020 7014 6000

www.panmacmillan.com

Mindscape 01293 651335

www.mindscape.com

Walker Books 01256 302692

Words of Discovery 0845 458 1199

www.wordsofdiscovery.com

Wordsworth Classics 020 7706 8822

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

@@@

MEMBERS RECOMMENDATIONS

Sadly, this proposed new section has had to be discontinued almost before it had begun. The only contributions received were of an 'adventorial' nature (i.e. by people involved in the enterprise) - which was not the idea.

Members who wish to recommend a product or service should therefore write a brief letter for the Letters Pages.

ADVERTISERS - please note advertising guidelines on advertisement pages

We will continue, from time to time, to print information on new resources available to home educators

Archives for December 2002

Some early book reviews - may be still in print for Christmas 2002.

That'll Teach You by John Kirkbride (*Wildwood House*)

"This book is a documentation of the Kirkbride family's experiences, and its aim is to recall to the reader the hurt and confusion that school causes. . . . It ends with a plea: refuse to accept things as they are, become involved and concerned, question why -then act! . . . perceptive and provocative book, It would also make very effective theatre!"

(Reviewed by Robina Pye, 1979)

Children's Minds by Margaret Donaldson (*Fontana*)

"Margaret Donaldson's whole concern is how to reform school so that it can become a better place. With the prediction that if the 'enforced period of national service' (p 13) that is school is not going to be treated more seriously, the future of our society is at stake. . . (she) advocates that teachers should not be frivolous about their failures because of the 'intellectual needs of the Community'. What about the children's needs? Margaret Donaldson did not write about them."

(Review by Helen Fletcher, 1979)

School without Tears by Mollie Jenkins

"Her moving account of her own childhood experiences must surely recall for many of us and our children the sounds smells and incidents of our own school days. This is a book for all those in need of ideas and encouragement . . . while many of us are still arguing about the (right educational) direction Mrs Jenkins has been and come back. She is now setting out on her second journey armed once again with intuition and the strength of her own experience."

(Reviewed by Sandra Holmes 1979)

The Young Child by Daniel Udo de Haes (*Floris*)

The author laments the whole process of acceleration that now goes on "with prematurely logical inartistic methods of teaching young school children and with ever more technical toys, there is a general drive to accelerate external development and a tendency to disregard the unfolding of inner gifts, which are harmed or even destroyed by acceleration."

(Reviewed by Jackie Fearnley 1987)

Children without Childhood by Maria Winn

This is a well documented result of 3 years research into social change since the 1950s and its effects on children. Although set in the USA, it is equally relevant to British society. The idea sprang from the author's own experience as a parent in the 1970s and her observation that some fundamental change was taking place among children and society's view of children and childhood. Not recommended bedtime reading though - it's far too thought provoking.

(Reviewed by Heather Mitchell 1985)

Contact with LEAs and other Authorities

Some home educators have little or no contact with their LEA. Most home educators who do have contact are happy to have this, many find that the LEA advisor almost becomes a family friend, and a few of us have such a bad time that we are prepared to do anything rather than have someone from the LEA in our house again. The very best recommendation I can make is: keep talking to them, never ignore a letter - it is easy to postpone a visit but if a letter is ignored someone will be on your case very quickly.

Many LEAs are understanding and even respectful of home educators; some are not. In my position on the helpline I frequently receive calls from people who are having a bad time with their LEA. Often the problem can be sorted out by a quick phone call - it's amazing what quoting the law at these officials will do. Having spoken to a few LEA officials I have found that the people at the top are the most reasonable. I would say that if you are planning on talking to your LEA, find the person in charge of the home education department, know in advance what you want to say, keep it simple and stay as calm as you possibly can. If you are being asked to do something that is unacceptable to you, quote the law, tell them exactly what you are prepared to do and ask why they are unhappy with what you are doing when others within EO see it as acceptable. One thing to remember is that these LEA people are only doing their job and whether they are being reasonable or not, at the end of the day they have to put something in their files, so it may as well be that you are a nice person who they have had a pleasant conversation with, rather than an unreasonable person with whom they have had an argument.

I know the following article has appeared in last December's newsletter but as I felt it was appropriate to this special section I asked the writer if I could reprint it. It does have some useful sentences which can be used in correspondence the LEA.

Autonomous Education - and LEAs

Autonomous education is about the act of handing back the power and control of learning to the learner. In relation to children it is about parents following their children's requests for information, resources, time, etc., and acting to fulfil those requests wherever possible. It does not leave the individual abandoned but rather supported in their own wishes and needs.

In relation to LEAs, autonomous education is about allowing a learner to have their own learning experience which belongs to them. It is neither about producing product for inspection or having it tailored to woefully narrow limitations of any sort of school curriculum. LEA Inspections are therefore not relevant to the autonomous approach to education. Any LEA which asks to inspect work produced by an autonomous learner has automatically shown their lack of understanding and, more importantly, their incompetence to assess the education provided. This is why I suggest to autonomous 'educators' (if there can be such a thing) that in order to fulfil their obligation to provide evidence of 'suitable' education they put the burden upon themselves rather than on their children. Since an

autonomous learner by definition has nothing to prove to an LEA, the parent needs to communicate to the LEA how they support the learning process so that it can take place, by supplying resources and support, as mentioned above.

Educating autonomously can bring difficulties with LEAs as it is not simply a modified form of education at home, but an entirely different philosophy of learning and life. LEAs in general are not equipped to understand or support autonomous learning. In this context it is important to realise that LEAs have no authority to impose a particular style of learning. They cannot impose timetables, curricula, subjects or attainment levels; and they certainly cannot exclude an educational philosophy, so long as that philosophy allows the child 'to achieve their full potential'.

More importantly LEAs actually have a duty to support efficient education. If they hamper or obstruct efficient autonomous education they are in breach of their duties. Keep this in mind if they behave unreasonably, particularly if your child has already attended school and been failed by it.

When communicating with LEAs it is important to co-operate with regard to your actual duties to supply evidence in any way you wish. Beyond this it is my experience that LEAs, on the whole, work within a bullying culture. They make difficulties for those they perceive to be vulnerable. Generally if it becomes clear to an LEA that you know your rights and are prepared to expect them to be upheld, they will drop into a more responsible and reasonable role. Of course if they do not, you have every right to complain, and all local authorities will have a department to direct complaints. No government body has a right to behave in an intimidating manner, the moment they do so they are in the wrong regardless of other issues.

A final word on inspections

As mentioned above, inspections are a totally inappropriate and ineffective method of assessing autonomous education and usually, when inspectors are allowed into autonomous home educator's homes, they attempt to enforce some level of traditional teaching/work production. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to appeal to those in EO who argue for giving up our right not to be inspected to speak only for themselves. I support any person's right to be inspected if they wish it. Likewise I support the right of those who do not wish to be. As it is clear from the above, there is nothing suspicious or anti-social in refusing to have these counter productive and pointless visits. If autonomous home education is to come to maturity as an effective style of learning, it is essential to remove the endless pressure on children to produce for these often-hostile strangers.

As autonomous home educators we need to be prepared to provide evidence of our own commitment and benign support of our children. It is the antithesis of autonomous education to place this burden upon our children.

Nick Vidal-Hall,

Autonomous Education Support 01548 8309716

Contact with our LEA

Our daughter was home educated until the age of 9 years. Having read all the literature from EO and elsewhere, we decided to inform our LEA of our intentions, although realising we were not obliged to do so. We were subsequently sent a questionnaire to complete, which asked about our reasons for home educating and our general intentions with regard to subjects etc. It was made clear that we did not have to complete the form and could just summarise our ideas in our own way, and there was an accompanying letter informing us about EO and the support offered.

A retired primary head teacher was assigned to visit us and came twice in the first year and annually thereafter. Visits usually lasted a couple of hours. We were fortunate in having someone who was experienced in visiting EO families, who was totally supportive of home education and its benefits and whom our daughter liked.

However, I think our own lack of experience, and anxiety about what was expected by the LEA, led us to feel that we had to produce written work as proof of progress, and this resulted in our structuring her learning rather more than we might otherwise have done. In fact, the only times of real conflict we had, centred around the times we insisted on projects, worksheets and school-type learning. As time went on, we tried to keep this to the bare minimum and we kept our own diary of daily activities and outings.

Our daughter went to school at 9 years, as she wanted a wider social circle. She persevered for 4 years before deciding to revert to being at home. Earlier this year we deregistered her and wrote to the LEA, who were able to arrange for us to have the same inspector.

Feeling more confident this time, we wanted to adopt a more autonomous approach, and to be open about this with the LEA. So far, this seems to be quite acceptable to our inspector and has led to us all feeling far more relaxed, both about home educating and about inspections. In retrospect, if we had had the courage previously to be more open about the way we wanted to home educate, we might have reduced some of the earlier pressures we placed on ourselves.

However, we are well aware that many inspectors would not be as accepting as ours has been, particularly with regard to an autonomous approach.

And despite all the above, we would still prefer to be left entirely to our own devices!

Name and address supplied

My LEA Experience

The EWO was a really pleasant person who liked what we were doing and enjoyed talking to my twelve-year-old. The fact that she came out to visit us 11 days after the school received my deregistration letter was slightly unnerving. We were lulled by this first pleasant experience into a false sense of security. Our second LEA visitor brought us back to earth with a bang.

The woman herself was not unpleasant but refused to take off her coat, which we thought was a bit odd. Then out of the briefcase came the ominous black folder with the printed form asking what we covered in: Maths, English, Science, History, Geography, IT,

Religion, Sport etc. We could not believe this was happening to us. I had written to the LEA telling them we were using an autonomous approach to education and asking if the advisor who came out would be understanding of this approach; we had been informed that the person who was going to visit us was an experienced officer who fully understood autonomous education. I think we were speaking in different languages because this woman obviously knew nothing about autonomy. It appeared to be the belief of the LEA that all home education was autonomous as we were doing what we wanted to do rather than sending our children to school!

As the advisor was leaving she said she would come back in 3 months; I knew that we would not be able to see this woman on a regular basis so I told her that I wasn't sure about that. The woman then turned nasty and in front of my child said that she would take us to court if not allowed to visit in 3 months. Fortunately I had read up on the law, knew that this was not acceptable and told her so. Imagine if I had not read up on the law relating to home education. I would have felt totally intimidated by this woman who wanted to control the way I was home educating. Her behaviour was unacceptable; to me it seemed as if she was on a total power trip.

I have heard that other families have been visited by this woman and been treated in a similar way. One person was told by our advisor that the education she was providing was unsuitable; she asked for a second opinion and was told by a more reasonable advisor that what she was doing was satisfactory - sadly this is the highest accolade awarded by the LEA to home educators.

I would say to anyone, have another person with you when visited by the LEA. If you are on your own record the meeting on a tape recorder and tell the visitor that you are doing so, this way they are less likely to feel that they can intimidate you. Most importantly, read up on the law relating to home education. This can be found on the EO web site:

www.education-otherwise.org * For those who do not possess a computer, every person is allowed between 20 and 30 minutes free internet access at a Library; sometimes the Library will require you to have a valid Library ticket. The Library staff will usually be able to help.

After the bad experience we decided not to have another visit and now write a report when asked for evidence by the LEA. This always starts by telling the LEA a little about our educational philosophy, a little about what we don't do, i.e. we do not use a timetable or follow the national curriculum, we do not follow school hours, etc. Then we state what we do, i.e. we learn through life, we read books, we use computers, we bake cakes, we visit museums, we attend regular meetings with other home educators, we do masses of art & craft work, we play musical instruments, we do any everyday maths which crops up in our day-to-day life and we do anything else that interests us. So far the LEA have accepted this. I also send a copy of the letter to someone else in EO and to the Director of Education at my LEA, and I put on the bottom of the letter the fact that I have sent copies to these others. I don't know if this does any good but I feel it lets the reader know that you have support and that you are not afraid to talk to their superior, who (in my case) may or may not know of the advisor's over-controlling attitude.

Name and address supplied

* Also, of course, in your copy of *School Is Not Compulsory!* Anne Rix

Post-16 Post LEA

So your child is 16 and you can breathe a sigh of relief. No more jumping through hoops (or just worrying that you may feel you need to) for the LEA. But if you want to continue receiving child benefit for that child, (and she is STILL not attending a recognised education establishment) is there hoop-jumping for some other decision-making authority?

My daughter Cat turned 16 in December 2001, and this summer I received a form from the child benefit centre requesting information about her intended studies for her post-16 education. I know that EO fought for pre-16 educational provision approved to be accepted post-16, but I found myself caught between the theory and the fact that Cat's child benefit was stopped because I had not supplied the required information. Entitlement to child benefit post-16 rests on the child benefit centre being assured that the child does a minimum of 12 hours study a week (this being full-time).

Cat does no formal study and has no immediate plans to do so. I considered compiling a listing of her activities, translated into formal study jargon for the benefit of someone not initiated into the wonders of an autonomously-home-educated teenager's lifestyle. I decided that, if push came to shove, I was quite prepared to write a completely fictitious account in order to safeguard my family's income but that, as a first shot, I would try to explain how full-time Cat's non-academic education is. So I outlined a life-buy with developing practical, creative skills (canoeing, caving, climbing, hiking, camping). I made a slight concession to bureaucracy by suggesting possible career developments leading from these areas of interest.

A fortnight later I telephoned to progress my letter. I waited while the child benefit decision-maker read said letter. He then asked the same questions that the form had asked: what formal study is Cat doing and is it full-time? So we verbally fumbled around each other - he trying to grasp the meaning of my letter and me trying to translate it into terms he was familiar with - until it came down to this: He asks "would you say this amounts to more than 12 hours study?" and I reply "yes". Job done. Child benefit reinstated and arrears paid.

And the moral of this tale? If you understand what the child benefit centre need in order to continue paying you, then you need not lose sleep over your child ending up in premature employment because you may not be able to afford to keep her in the style to which she has become accustomed!

Pam Bellinger, 56 Beech Drive, Leicester

Thank you to those who wrote in for this special section. I hope to compile a dossier of examples of LEA contact, which will be of use to new members of EO as well as to helpline secretaries supporting members and prospective members.

Due to technical problems, imminent visits of the LEA and late arrivals of articles, we have decided to extend this SS to the April issue, so if you have anything to say about contact with an LEA or other authority relating to the fact that you are home educating, please send (as early as you like, but in any case by 20th February) to:

*Jo Borthen, 57 Florida Drive, Exeter, EX4 5EX Devon or preferably email
jo4eo@aol.com Letters/articles to be received by 20th February 2003.*

HOME EDUCATION RESEARCH

A message from Pam Vickers, (acting) Research Contact

Since last year I've been named in the newsletter as the acting research contact. I'm not an expert. Many of you will know more than I do. I hope to learn more.

I've been a member of EO since 1996 - from 1998 to 2000 a very active member throughout Kent (Hello to everyone who remembers me!). I remained a member when my son chose to go to school. He is now nearly 10 and, for the moment at least, home educated.

Professionally I've been involved in Education for 25 years - from Montessori through Primary and Secondary, College, University and Adult Education to Teacher Training (although not in this neat linear order!) but on a personal level have found more in common with home educators than mainstream education.

My interest is in providing opportunities for holistic approaches to learning, and in the context of my work in Applied Linguistics I have researched various aspects of the learning process.

Yes, I'm a teacher, lecturer and academic; but rather than say that I teach I hope it is appropriate to say that I help people to learn. At the same time I'm a parent and, like you, chose to home educate because, as a parent, I believed that it was the right thing to do.

My work can sometimes take me abroad and at times can be very demanding. Because of this I'm not always able to reply to messages for some time. I'll do my best.

Is more research into home education necessary? Do we need to justify what we do and prove that it works? As you are aware, it seems there are several key questions we are asked regarding home education - the same questions from those who are seriously considering home educating and those who are rather sceptical and also those, including the media, who are researching related issues. The questions concern the following:

- Who home educates?
- What are their reasons?
- How do they go about it?
- And what about social contact?!

Although there has been research that can provide an indication of the answers, it would be useful if EO as an organisation could provide its own answers to these questions. As well as helping us to have a better understanding of the wide range of home education, this information would be useful for membership enquiries and other individuals we can help. It could also be made available outside the organisation where appropriate and contribute towards a better understanding of home education.

The media are often accused of portraying a view of home education which is not how we see ourselves. Shouldn't we do something about this?

A lack of objective information can always be challenged as unrepresentative or give rise to a narrow, inaccurate view of what constitutes home education. My feeling is that real representative evidence (specifically, research from within EO) might help to raise the profile of home education, remove some misconceptions and be another step towards recognition.

So, PLEASE complete (and send - freepost!) the questionnaire enclosed with this NL as soon as possible (probably now is the best time to do it!). Your response is important. It will provide valuable information for EO in that it will help us to ensure that we address the needs and represent the views of all our members, and it could help to pave the way for future research. Complete anonymity will be maintained, and information obtained will only be released outside EO with the approval of the EO Council.

If you feel that research is important and would like to comment on aspects of home education that need to be researched, please attach a separate sheet.

If you feel you cannot complete the questionnaire please let me know why. You might feel "What right does anyone have to know this information?" The answer is "no right" - but please consider the ways in which it might serve to support home educators in the future.

N.B. When completing the questionnaire, please take *home educated* to refer to all children between the ages of 5 and 16 who are not registered with and do not attend a school. Please take *school* to refer to a registered State or Private institution providing daily structured formal or informal education for children of any age or mixed ages between 5 and 16 (but which may also provide for those below the age of 5 or above the age of 16). Please take *pre-school* to include any registered organisation which provides the opportunity for a range of regular structured or unstructured learning experiences for classes or groups of young children who are not normally accompanied by a parent.

Pam Vickers

There will be an
Open Council Meeting of Education Otherwise Ltd
On January 25th 2003 at 10 am

At Manorbier Youth Hostel, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

All EO members are welcome to attend

For copies of the agenda please contact the Chair:

Jill Fisher, 54 Ratcliffe road, Leicester, LE2 3TD or email jill.fisher@care4free.net

**The Annual General Meeting of
Education Otherwise Association Ltd**
Will be held at Manorbier Youth Hostel, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park
On Saturday 25th January 2003 at 2.30 pm

The business of the AGM is to consider the accounts, to receive reports from officers, to elect members to the Council of Management, and to appoint auditors.

The number of Council members is set at between 14 and 19. As at November 2002 there are 17 members in post (see inside back cover), five of whom must retire at the forthcoming AGM but may seek re-election. The Council may recommend other candidates for election. Signed-up members (i.e. guarantors) of EO may also propose candidates. In this case, written notice from the proposer and signed consent from the candidate (who must also be a registered member) must both reach the **general secretary** no earlier than **December 27th** and no later than **January 21st**. In the event of a vote at the AGM, registered members personally present are entitled to take part provided they have paid their subscription.

If you wish to become a signed-up member (guarantor) of EO, please write to the **company secretary** as soon as possible, enclosing an SAE or return address label with stamp.

The Company Secretary is Pam Bellinger (see inside back cover)

Website Reviewers Wanted

A volunteer panel of people with internet access is needed to write reviews of websites for publication on the EO website. We frequently receive requests to place links to sites (some are commercial, some private) and reviewers are needed to look at them with a view to their helpfulness to home educators. Some weeks there are no requests so the reviewers would then be asked to review sites which they have personal experience of. If you are interested in being a reviewer, please contact Jacqui Houlding at jc_houlding@onetel.net.uk

EO Handbook 2003

Work is well under way on the 2003 issue of the Handbook, which will be published early next year.

If you have any comments for further inclusions, exclusions, updated info, etc. please send them to Penny Clarke pennyclarke@blueyonder.co.uk Tel 01922 745465 **by December 20th at the very latest.**

Local Contact Co-ordinator Needed

EO is looking for someone to take over as Local Contact Co-ordinator as soon as possible.

Ideally this should be someone with experience of both Local Contact work and proactive work with LEAs. The Local Contact Co-ordinator will be expected to provide support and information to Local Contacts and to work with others to develop a support network.

This is a key position within EO

and a full job description can be found on page 30 of the EO Handbook.

If you are interested please contact Jill Fisher at Jill.Fisher@care4free.net or on 0116 212 8120.

EO CHRISTMAS CARDS ?

On escaping into the light from my treasurers cave, I discovered it was Christmas time, and as is my habit, I purchased my Christmas cards with suitable donations given to my favourite charities, only for it to dawn on me - I couldn't contribute to the one I most wanted to!

Why don't we have an EO card? (I asked of anyone who came within earshot). What better way of both raising funds for EO, and spreading the message of home education to our friends? Who would design it, came the reply? Our kids, I thought.

So here's the plan, send your drawings, (they don't have to be professional, it's the ideas that count), and/or slogans to NL Co-ordinator, then next newsletter we'll print 'em, and invite you all to comment on which ideas take your fancy. The most liked will be printed up, and on sale from the summer.

Garry Humphreys, Treasurer.

Learn Premium Website - Special Offer for EO Members

Learn.co.uk, an online educational service run by the Guardian, has offered EO members a joint, low cost subscription to Learn Premium, a digital subscription service aimed at primary and secondary age children and their teachers. EO has agreed to pay Learn.co a lump sum and is making a small charge to each user to cover this cost.

Access to the service will cost EO members £10 per family, from now until October 2003. The service is aimed at schools and is not available to private individuals.

There are about 35,000 pages of online lessons, tests, and topic-based information on a whole range of subjects. This website looks particularly useful for home educators who wish to follow a more structured learning programme but at £10 it might be worth giving it a try whatever your approach.

Learn Premium resources include:

- Online lessons
- Guardian topical lesson packs
- Revision and homework guides
- Three web guides
- Randomly generated tests
- Projects and events
- Daily news service for 9-13 year olds

The web address is <http://premium.learn.co.uk> where more details of the service are available.

If you would like to subscribe please send your name, address, e-mail address and a cheque for £10 made out to Education Otherwise Association to:

Jill Fisher, 54 Ratcliffe Rd, Leicester, LE2 3TD.

You will then be sent details of how to log on to the service.

8<<----->>8



Education Otherwise discount voucher for NEC courses

£30

EO Membership no:

Please attach this voucher to enrolment form and payment

£30 off the total enrolment value of your NEC course/s

Cannot be used in conjunction with any other discount
Valid until 30 April 2003

Only one voucher per enrolment form

NEW HOME-ED RESOURCES

Geography - Ordnance Survey site

Visit the free, child-safe, educational website (<http://www.mapzone.co.uk>) that has been created "to help teachers make geography and mapping lessons more fun while helping pupils with their homework" but may be useful also for home educators. The Homework Help section for children uses maps, animations, quizzes and games for fun interactive learning of basic map skills for school and home learning. The OS Education team state: "we are constantly doing our best to improve this site so that children can derive real educational value from it. We have been working with teachers at BECTA to make this site ideal for key stage 3 national curriculum geography."

Oxford Reading Tree

The Oxford Reading Tree Online is now making the website available to all home educators at a special discount rate of 70%. This means that access for one whole year is £30.00. If you decide to subscribe, state that you are a home educator and mention Mike Green, Internet Sales and Marketing Co-ordinator who will ensure you get the special rate subscription (tel 01865 354021 / email greenmic@oup.co.uk) The web site is at www.OxfordReadingTree.com



*** CONSUMER PROTECTION ***

NB It's as well to make sure you read all the small print **before** signing up for services such as distance learning schemes with payment by instalments. It is possible that you may still be liable to pay the instalments, even if you find that the service is not providing what you want and decide not to continue with it. However, goods and services are covered by the Consumer Protection Acts and if, for example, you feel that the product is not as described, it might be a good idea to speak to your local Citizens Advice Bureau or Trading Standards Department (at Local Town/District Council). (This notice has no particular relevance to items above). *Archie R*



Don't remember your EO membership number?

If you can't find your EO membership card in the jar of odd bits on the mantelpiece, delve into the pile of envelopes waiting for re-use / recycling and look at the one your NL arrived in - there's the number!

(after Archie - p 22)

(See elsewhere in this NL for details of EO/NEC meeting)

EDUCATING ARCHIE by SEG

Mrs G writes her Christmas 2002 letter.....

Dear Friends
(and family)
What a year.



Scribble
Scribble

lucky for the Queen
that her Jubilee
was also EO's 25th
year celebrations

and for
Archie &
me another
challenging
EO year.



Some lively
experiments
going science.
(KEY STAGE 148)

..to those of
you who
worry
wonder
about
exams
= May I like
reassure
you by
explaining
that =



2002 has
in fact been
Archie's
GAP YEAR



Again!
we wish
you a
Merry
Christmas

ARCHIE MUGS + POSTCARDS at JANUARY GATHERING

DON'T ATTACK IRAB

Meeting between EO and the National Extension College (NEC)

Friday 13th September was *not* an unlucky day as Penny Clarke, Geraldine Adams and I had a very positive meeting with the National Extension College - a non profit making and independent educational trust committed to widening educational opportunities through open and distance learning. The NEC had invited EO to meet with them following two coincidental events. Firstly the NEC had just completed an internal research project, in the form of a questionnaire, to find out more about the people using their services. One discovery, that the number of pre-16s amongst their student population had grown from 1% to 7% over the last couple of years, the vast majority being full-time home educators, in fact confirmed their experience of working with more and more EO members (often taking GCSEs with the NEC). This evidence, coupled with the second event - seeing lots of publicity around the time of our 25th Anniversary celebrations, led to the invitation to meet.

We met with Dr Ros Morpeth, the Executive Director of the NEC who, in an award ceremony held recently in South Africa, was among five British nationals to become Honorary Fellows of the Commonwealth of Learning. This was in recognition for her contribution to the development of distance learning projects designed to meet pressing education and training needs in Commonwealth member nations. Anne Faulkner, Executive Assistant and Gillian Moore, Head of Study Programmes were the other participants from the NEC.

Purpose of the meeting

We did not have a formal agenda for the meeting, but the primary objective was to get to know each other and establish a working relationship between the NEC and EO. The most urgent issues to tackle are the increasing difficulty external candidates face in getting access to exam centres; practical matters such as students being able to use labs for science work; how we might bring variation into the usual learning approaches currently available; plus the basic question of families obtaining actual funds for resources and suitable courses - and/or having access to facilities funded centrally. Funding has been a more difficult area of concern with the fairly inflexible demarcation between money for pre-16s being held by education authorities (who say they provide schools) and money for courses and college places that are designed with post-16s in mind, being held by the Learning and Skills Council. NB Colleges of Further & Higher Education do take some pre-16s, for example, 'disruptive' pupils where education authority money transfers from the school budget with the young person, also some colleges *will* take home-educated students although funding remains highly problematical (see the 'Pre-16s and College Courses' report on EO's website - www.education-otherwise.org - or Newsletter No 142 Oct 2001). Another area of concern that we need to deal with and which also relates to external candidates, is the problem of getting coursework marked for those not undertaking a correspondence course; a problem made more acute recently with the finishing of IGCSEs where assessment was based on final exams only.

A little background information

EO and the NEC share a belief in facilitating affordable and better learning opportunities. In fact the co-founder of the NEC was Lord Young of Dartington, an amazing social reformer well known for his involvement with the Small School, plus inventing the Open University, the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE), the Consumers' Association, writing the post war labour party manifesto, and a great deal more (an egalitarian who accepted the peerage for pragmatic reasons - subsidised rail travel and accommodation in London!). However, even with this background it is a fact that many EO members, in addition to some of the problems mentioned above with regard to taking GCSEs as external candidates, simply cannot afford the fees of correspondence courses - and we did refer to the different costs of other providers.

Discount for EO members

To alleviate some of the financial burden straight away, the NEC has offered our members a discount of £30 per enrolment (we will clarify how this is to be administered ASAP but there may be a voucher with this N/L). Members are also advised to check the NEC's website (www.nec.ac.uk) for up-to-date information and special discounts - such as the one referred to in the last EO newsletter which offered a substantial saving. It may be helpful to know that the NEC has a mailing list where people can be kept fully informed of latest prices and offers.

Possible future directions

At the meeting the NEC referred to ways they are currently extending how they function in order to bring more flexibility into the system. This includes initiatives where the NEC is linking up with some schools and colleges, might these be adapted so that home educators could be included? We will keep members informed of any developments in due course.

Learning webs/ links/systems may hold some serious possibilities for us, and we aim to pressure government to find ways of really enhancing (in our case stop preventing) learner opportunities. We will be considering the best possible options for new places for external candidates to sit exams, bearing in mind those in our membership who have had a difficult relationship with school and who may not wish to re-visit them, even just as an exam centre. A further problem with using schools for this purpose is that league tables are making head teachers concerned to take on unknown students, in case they bring down the school's position, which is ironic as home-educated students usually do well in exams as they take them when they are ready! Perhaps public libraries and even Steiner or Montessori schools might be considered as venues for exam taking, as well as a source of trained teachers, approved by the exam boards, who could mark course work? We would, I believe, need to ensure that as many facilities are available locally as possible.

The NEC is already working with many organisations and policy makers with regard to adult education. With their recognition of the way *younger* learners are also benefiting from individual approaches that better meet their needs, coupled with the way they are already involved at national political level (see the NEC's response to the Consultation on Extending Opportunities, the 14-19 Green Paper), the NEC are well placed partners for working with EO with government and perhaps education authorities as well. If we succeed in making progress on opening up different ways of learning and being assessed (when and if desired), which I feel sure we will in time, this is potentially very exciting for learners of all ages, interests, aptitudes and needs, not just home educators.

In the meantime the NEC have set up a young learners group on part of their website for support, on-line guidance and help with revision. This is at www.nec.ac.uk/groups/young-learners. Also, available via the website is a newsletter for young learners and their families. It is called, *Home Education Matters*, and it forms a good summary of the position of home educators with respect to the NEC, as gleaned from their questionnaire referred to above. Of particular interest is a finding that 89% of the young students who responded to the survey found distance learning easy or very easy. Let's try and make access more widely available.

National Extension College
Michael Young Centre
Purbeck Road
Cambridge CB2 2HN

Tel: 01223 400 200
Fax: 01223 400 399
Email: info@nec.ac.uk
Website: www.nec.ac.uk

Gwen Baldock

October 2002

* Cut-out voucher on page 19 of this NL.

Highland Home-educators Discuss ...

With the National Debate on Education taking place soon after the Scottish Executive had issued draft guidance on home education, education is definitely on the agenda in Scotland. A few of us here in the Highlands got together, informally, to discuss some of the issues involved. To what extent did we share opinions on education and home education? Were we too different to be able to reach a consensus? Do home educators have anything to offer in a general debate on education?

We started with the widest question first: what is education for? I think we were all surprised by the level of agreement on this: 'for life', 'to enable people to lead happy, fulfilled lives', 'to reach your full potential.' None of us wanted to limit it any further.

Home education was the next topic for discussion. We came up with a whole list of phrases to describe what we felt to be the essence of home education:-

Flexibility ~ whole family learning ~ freedom ~ learning when inspired ~ self-motivation ~ real lifelong learning ~ self-discipline ~ efficiency ~ huge breadth ~ part of life and the community ~ not led by tests/exams ~ suitable for all, especially those with special needs or gifts ~ offers learning opportunities for those experiencing problems at school ~ positive values ~ can pursue interests to their full extent ~ not limited to that which is recordable.

We could have added a lot more but wanted to move on to the next question that we had set ourselves. What are the main issues facing home educators at the moment?

This was an area with a greater diversity of opinion. Do we want state funding for home educators? To what extent should local authorities monitor home education? How can we tell who is 'legitimately' home educating rather than allowing their children to truant? Why is home education perceived to be so threatening to schools and local authorities?

We disagreed with one another a lot, but found some common ground. We all wanted home education to be recognised as a normal and positive choice, available to all parents. We felt that parents should be made aware

that school is not compulsory. We hoped that local authorities would feel able to support home education rather than discourage it, and that the correct legal information would be on all L.A. literature. Better use, we thought, could be made of L.A. resources - allowing home educators access to resource centres and old or spare equipment/books, and helping with the practicalities of exams. And, we agreed, all L.A.s need to have training (be educated?) about autonomous education.

Most of us felt we held a stake in school education too - that it is in the whole community's interest to have schools that educate children well. Others felt that, having rejected schools for our children, it was not our place to try to influence them - or perhaps, that schools were beyond reform.

We wanted schools to have respect for children and to have a more flexible, child-centred approach to learning. Children should have much more say over what, when, where and how they learn, with an emphasis on projects rather than 'lessons' and 'subjects'. There should be no set curriculum, less homework, minimal testing, mixed age/sex/ability groups, and shorter school hours. We hoped that teachers could become facilitators, focussing on learning/education rather than on teaching. Finally, we think schools should recognise that diversity is positive.

So, these are some of the things we discussed (while the children splashed in the paddling pool and shovelled sand in the sandpit!). It was particularly interesting to hear the differing opinions. No doubt another group would come up with a completely different range of views, issues and priorities. We had no claim at all to be representative of the wide spectrum of home educators in the Highlands! Why not write in with your views?

Rebecca Kail, Inverness

P.S. One thing we all agreed on - the law requiring local authority permission for de-registering children from school is anomalous and should be scrapped.

~~~~~

Highland Home-educators meet up regularly in Inverness and for outings elsewhere in the Highland area. Contact Alison 01463 232571

## SCOTLAND - The National Debate on Education

Mainly due to initiating action by members in Inverness, EO is engaging in the national debate on the future of Education in Scotland. (Written contributions were to be in by end of June.) The idea was that they wanted input with regard to vision for ten years hence and beyond in order to inform future policy. It is good that home educators are participating as we have so much to offer with regard to VISION.

The Scottish Executive met with the Highland Home Educators Group (HHEG) in Inverness, and a small group of EO members met with them in Edinburgh a few weeks later. We did not make a representation on behalf of EO as a body (which given the wealth and diversity of ideas on education which abound within home education would be impossible to pin down to one contribution) but as a varied selection of home educators feeding in through this discussion format.

This group comprised of a long time home educating family (parents and two of their home educated adult children (all Eoldies)), two parents who had recently taken children out of school, a single parent recently "discovered" by the Education authority and me, an elective autonomous home educator, well versed in the current issues. We benefited from the earlier HHEG meeting in that the officer was already well appraised of the basics ... she began with a smile "OK, so you don't have to tell me about socialising!" We then touched on the "compulsory" aspects of education and school, welfare and the lack of clarity within the school system on it and its limits, the need for all parents (but especially those of young children) to be made aware that they are making choices about their children's education, thereby empowering and supporting parents, flexi-schooling and the development of resource centres, respect for all young people and real listening as opposed to token listening. The officer commented on the depth of thinking about education she had found in both groups, and listened with enthusiasm.

A few weeks ago the Minister for Education and Young People, Cathy Jamieson, made a statement in the Scottish Parliament about the emerging views in the debate. This is an interim report on the views expressed. The analysis of results is to continue into next year. At first sight the statement was disappointing - telling of views of caution about change and upholding the comprehensive system - but on closer reading of the full statement it was clear that the minister was embracing the move towards tailoring education more to the needs of the individual child. She was clear there was a tension between the fear of more change (people are apparently fed up with new initiatives all the time) and such a move towards individual needs, while still valuing comprehensive principles. She expressed the need to find ways of achieving this and overcoming the tensions.

Holyrood Magazine, the magazine of the parliament asked EO to contribute a short response to the Minister's statement. Here it is:

### ***The National Debate: Home Education***

*It is heartening to hear the minister hold out for both the meeting of individual pupils' needs and for the achievement of this under comprehensive principles. Education Otherwise applauds the government's desire "to offer the right opportunities for our children and young people to meet their aspirations, achieve their potential and build the future that is right for them". Responsibility for ensuring that children receive an education lies with the parents. For families who wish to*

*undertake it, home education is an ideal way to provide an education uniquely suited to the individual while encouraging the principle of equality and involvement in the community.*

*The majority of respondents in the National Debate apparently felt that schools should remain central to the provision of education in Scotland. For some in Scotland, however, the home and community are at the centre of their educational provision. Young people educated in this way have the opportunity to experience a truly personalised education which meets their individual needs and talents.*

*We welcome the government's desire "to find ways of increasing flexibility in organising learning and teaching at a local level". We would hope that this will include a more flexible use of schools to provide resource and exam centres for home educators. We would also like to see a more flexible approach to exams, allowing young people to follow exam courses when they are ready rather than automatically at set ages.*

*The government has said "We should not be afraid to change, where change is needed to improve the quality and relevance of the education service that our children receive." Our ideal would be an education system which incorporated a range of possibilities, including full and part time school education, vocational training, and home and community based education. Change of this kind would allow the flexibility in educational provision, which would truly allow every child to reach their full potential.*

Home educators in Scotland are engaging the authorities, local as well as national, in meaningful discussion about education - particularly home education - and in so doing are winning respect for the concept and practice of home education. It is beginning to be seen more widely as the legally valid alternative that it is and the choice as a right of all families, not merely the penchant of a marginal few. There is still a long way to go but a change of attitude is perceptible and with more and more reasoned speaking up, will spread. Speak up softly with reason...but don't shout!

*Ann Samuel Till*

---

## Highland gathering

When home educator Alison Sauer moved to the Highlands at the start of the year she brought with her just enough fresh energy to blow away a few home ed cobwebs! (Actually that took a gale force wind). She along with a few local members started the Highland Home Educators Group (interdenominational with respect to home ed groups: members of each, all and none are part of it). After the EO local contacts gathered in August for a short meeting and social, everyone thought we needed more ... Pete Turnbull from Inverness told Alison and the HHEG and ...lo and behold! A big, successful, great fun highland gathering happened the first weekend of November at Glenmore YH near Aviemore.

This weekend was what it is really all about: parents with a common value or goal (HE) getting together to share and support each other, as usual by endless talking and washing up, with home educated children and young folk doing the same as usual by playing! Tensions and political approaches left behind and actual home educating and parenting on the table! A great reminder that we all have more in common than we have differences. Everyone wanted more. Well done Alison and Ralph for the work put into it and to all there who brought the fun.

(The following report is also posted on the EO website)

## **Meeting with the Scottish Executive**

*Four members of the EO response team had a meeting on September 27th with officers from the Scottish Executive as part of the consultation process for the guidance on home education in Scotland. We met with the officers who have recently taken over responsibility for amending the draft to discuss the major issues raised by it, and to try and discover what form the consultation process will take in the future. This was a preliminary discussion at our suggestion with the intention of helping the new staff to understand some of the difficulties home educators have with the draft guidance and to hear their concerns and where they are in the process.*

We emphasised that as home educators are the providers and consumers of home education, the guidance should reflect their views and experience and should only incorporate the views of local authorities in so far as the practicalities of implementation are concerned. In other words the views of home educators as the experts in home education should be weighted heavily over those of education authorities within the parameters of the statute and the spirit of the law.

The officers indicated that they are hoping to have further meetings with EO and with other home educating groups as well as with local authorities. There was no detailed discussion of EO's response at this meeting, but they have agreed that it will be necessary to have detailed discussions with all parties when they have fully assimilated the issues involved. They were unable to commit to an exact timetable, but did say that they are trying to prioritise the guidance as it has been dragging on for so long.

EO will continue to put pressure on the executive to keep the consultation process on the guidance moving.

In the meantime we have written to Schoolhouse and HEAS in Scotland to inform them of the meeting as it is our view that co-operation between home education support groups will be crucial in achieving the best possible outcome for the consultation process on the guidance in Scotland. If you are aware of any other home education support groups in Scotland who might like to be kept informed, please contact Jill Fisher or Ann Samuel Till.

*Jill Fisher, Chair, on behalf of the EO draft guidance response team*

---

## **RONA (Record of Needs Alert)**

EO has received a letter and briefing pack from the **RONA** committee.

They say that 'within the next 3 months the Scottish executive will publish the first draft of a new piece of legislation which will eliminate the Records of Needs system' replacing it with a Co-ordinated Support Plan (only for children with complex special educational needs, not for children with specific or pronounced SEN). They are concerned that this will 'diminish some of the most fundamental legal rights of parents and children'.

Parents can contact them directly on 0131 663 9588, email [support@rona.org.uk](mailto:support@rona.org.uk), web page [www.rona.org.uk](http://www.rona.org.uk). If any member in Scotland with a particular interest or involvement in this would like to be involved for EO as well as personally, please get in touch with Ann Samuel Till.

## LETTERS PAGES

### Letter from Russia

In June 2002 my 11 year old daughter (who has been home-educated for 4 years) and I went to Russia as part of the Exeter/Yaroslavl twinning association. She learns Russian as her foreign language and has a penpal in Moscow, so this seemed the ideal end of school year trip!

Whilst there I was invited to go along to the University to give a talk on home education as it is unheard of in Russia. I arrived somewhat nervously but the Russian welcome which is so warm and heartfelt dispelled my apprehension and I was able to give what I hope was a clear explanation of the basic outline with some illustrations of its diversity in practice.

Afterwards Florence and I answered questions and I was especially delighted that Florence who is quite shy and quietly spoken expressed herself articulately in a voice that could be heard by all. Our audience as very excited by the idea of home education had many questions and were full of gratitude that we had gone along to tell them all about it and we promised to send them some Education Otherwise information on our return.

*Hannah Hocking, Little Farm, Mill Cross, Rattery, South Brent, Devon TQ10 9LB*

### Moving to France

I and my husband Lee, and daughter Beverly (4), are buying a property in the countryside of France in the Haute Vienne region, near Limoges. We hope to move there in about two years.

Well, we've made the decision to go! Now all we need is as much information as possible. I admit to knowing very little of France or country life and any offers of advice will be greatly appreciated. Also if we can help anyone who may be thinking of doing the same, please drop us a line.

*Helen Scudamore, 14 Eltonia Croft, Sheldon, Birmingham B26 2UU Tel: 0121 743 2963*

### French exchange

While attending a home-education meeting in France in the summer I met a French family who are keen to do an exchange next summer with a home-educating family in England, preferably for about a month. Unfortunately, as I live in a small flat, it is not possible for us to offer them enough space. For anyone interested their details are as follows: Famille Tichané Gormand (Jean-Pierre and Brigitte). Their children are 19 (plus partner and baby due soon), 15, 13 and 2. They live in the countryside in South West France, 50km from Agen. They have a tent, which could accommodate some of their family if there is not a big enough house. Ideally they would like the whole family to be able to come. Their address for anyone who would like to take up this opportunity is 'Le camp du geai', 47370 Courbiac, France Tel: 05 53 40 72 24 E-mail: [campdugeai@free.fr](mailto:campdugeai@free.fr)

*Jill Anderson, Flat 5, 12 Carlton Road, Manchester M16 8BB Tel: 0161 2268509 E-mail: [Jill.Anderson@ukgateway.net](mailto:Jill.Anderson@ukgateway.net)*

### Sailing around the world

We are hoping to set off around the world in a 40' yacht next year with our children, currently aged 5 and 2, and would like to ask for the advice or the experiences of any parents who have educated their children under similar circumstances.

We have discounted the idea of correspondence courses initially, as our educational needs will, I believe, be fairly simple in the first few years and we will be out of contact for weeks at a time. However, it is our hope that the children will be ready willing and able to attend mainstream schooling on our return, so we hope to cover the National Curriculum as we go.

As background, our daughter is attending an excellent local primary school where she is very happy and doing well, our son attends a nursery 3 days a week where he gets lots of stimulation and attention, and between us my husband and I have the knowledge to handle the full scope of subjects required.

*Sue Dallas, 21 Farriers Reach, Bishops Cleeve, Glos GL52 7UZ E-mail: [iaim@mdallas.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:iaim@mdallas.fsnet.co.uk)*

### Gideon Bible

Every year thousands of young people entering Secondary School are given the opportunity of receiving a personal, pocket sized New Testament and Psalms, and when my home-educated son reached this stage he was keen to have his own copy too.

He was delighted to receive his New Testament and we thought that others might also like to apply for a personal copy. Any home-educated young people aged 11+ are welcome to request a New Testament by contacting The Gideons International, (mentioning they are home-educated to save any confusion about duplication through school distribution) who will then arrange for a personal copy to be presented to them by their local branch of the Gideons.

The address to contact is:  
The Gideons International in the British Isles,  
Western House, George Street, Lutterworth,  
Leicestershire LE17 4EE or e-mail:  
[hq@gideons.org.uk](mailto:hq@gideons.org.uk)

*Jane de la Haye, 41 Francis Street,  
Wick, Caithness KW1 5NR*

### Informal education sessions

A new Steiner school has joined forces with local EO members and will run informal afternoon sessions, open to all home educators and flexi-schoolers, for children aged 4-11 years. (The school runs its formal class lessons in the morning.) This arrangement benefits both this very new school (which is a non-profit-making organisation) by attracting local family support and home educating families who do not wish to send their children to any school, but who would like access to regular group activities.

So far, there are three subject areas on offer – French conversation, Organic Cooking (in winter) and Organic Gardening (in summer) and Sculpture – on three separate afternoons. A fee will be charged to cover costs. The venue is an ecobarn in the heart of a beautiful

woodland nature reserve, Thornham Walks. For more information telephone 01379 788944.

The hope is that the project will branch out further into the community, eventually establishing a small biodynamic market garden which will be the foundation for activities and environmental educational programmes open to all.

It would be interesting to hear of other such community ventures where people can formally join up and share resources without compromising their educational approaches.

*Jenny Rogers, Walnut Tree Cottage, Wood Lane,  
Starston, Harleston, Norfolk IP20 9PP Tel:  
01379 853439*

### Contact wanted

I am a new member of EO and wish to make contact with other members, especially new ones, in Kent for moral support and fun activities for the children. Sense of humour essential!

I have a four year old son and three year old daughter who enjoy anything from playing in the park to cake baking at home. We could meet regularly and decide on future events.

*Wendy Stennett, 9 Highfield Cl., Rough Common,  
Canterbury, Kent CT2 9DX Tel: 01227 463077*

### And from Suffolk

We are home educators living in Suffolk and have a 2½ year old son.

We are finding it increasingly difficult to meet others with children who share the same views. I find it difficult at conventional Parent and Toddler groups, music groups etc. as my son's peers are now starting to play with guns, being smacked, called 'naughty' and generally being stereotyped into people's ideas of how boys should behave. We are keen to avoid all this and bring our son up in a non-violent environment.

I would love to hear from anyone, anywhere who shares these views, as I feel quite alone in these thoughts.

*Hilary Woolf, 3 Blacksmiths Cottages, Clarkes  
Lane, Ilketshall St Andrew, Suffolk NR34 8HR*

## Contact wanted while in the UK

Hi,

We are a home learning family with 3 boys (6,8 & 9) from Western Australia and we will be in the UK from the beginning of October to the end of January. We will be in Solihull and Brighton and would love to meet up with some other home learners. We can be contacted at [jarksjarks@hotmail.com](mailto:jarksjarks@hotmail.com)

Kerri

## LEA visit

I spoke to someone last year about my daughter, Hana, being with Education Otherwise and in July we had a visit from Croydon LEA to find out what my daughter is capable of. They wanted her to do a project, which she has done but not sent. After her visit the Inspector sent her report on the visit and said she will keep in touch, but my daughter is not happy for her to come to the house and gets quite upset at the thought of it. The report Hana had from her was glowing so why does she need to come and see her again?

Hana does not want to go to college but may learn a trade when she is old enough. She is a good storyteller and would like to be a writer or, failing that, a hairdresser. She does not want to be pressured into things and, although she is not doing much Maths at home, she reads endlessly and has an interest in music.

Can anyone give me some advice as to how I can deal with the LEA over visits from the Inspector?

Also could someone tell me what the Law is on what I should and should not do? My daughter is so worried about it all that she will not go out during school hours because she is afraid a policeman will question her even though she has got a card from Education Otherwise.

*Mrs Merrett, 136 The Glade, Old Coulsdon, Surrey CR5 1SP*

## Eo video archive

Re. Jackie Fearnley's suggestion of setting-up a video archive (Letters, Oct. issue), I'm wondering if there's anyone still out there who might have a copy of the 20 minute programme we Cox's did for Thames TV's "Afternoon Plus" which was broadcast in the spring of 1982. We have it only on audio-cassette. At the time I turned down a copy because we didn't even have TV let alone a video: what an idiot! I know a few people did have a copy, immediately after the broadcast, but I suspect they've probably disappeared from the EO archives now. Thames say they no longer have it. We'd be absolutely over the moon if someone does.

*Di Cox, Grey Row Cottage, St.Margaret South Elmham, Suffolk, IP20 0PL Tel: 01986.782315.*

## THANK YOU

I would like to say a big "thank you" to all the home educators who have supported the Wise Owl Shareware library since it began in 1989. Some of you have become friends and I still keep in touch with many home educators through email and various mailing lists.

I am no longer actively advertising the library as I do not have the time to update it. However, the web site will remain online and any disks listed in old catalogues will still be available for the foreseeable future.

Times move on. Today, most people obtain their shareware directly from the internet. There is still a lot of good stuff around but much is too large to fit on trusty 3.5" floppies (I still occasionally get HE customers wanting 5.25" disks).

I have moved on too and am now working in adult basic education, teaching both literacy and numeracy. My big love is designing resources. Some of you may be interested in my web site: the UK Adult Basic Skills Resource Centre, which you can visit at:  
<http://members.aol.com/skillsworkshop/index.htm>

I'd love to hear from any old customers (or visitors to my latest site). My email address is still [wiseowlsw@aol.com](mailto:wiseowlsw@aol.com)

Best wishes to all  
*Maggie Harnew, Oxfordshire.*

## Some poems

### I TOOK HIS HAND AND FOLLOWED

My dishes went unwashed today;  
I didn't make my bed;  
I took his hand and followed  
Where his eager footsteps led.

Oh yes, we went adventuring  
My little child and I,  
Exploring all the great outdoors  
Beneath the sun and sky.

We watched a robin feed her young,  
We climbed a sunlit hill  
Saw cloud-sheep scamper through the sky  
And plucked a daffodil.

That my house was so neglected,  
That I didn't brush the stairs,  
In twenty years no one on earth  
Will know or even care.

But that I helped my little child  
To noble adulthood grow  
In twenty years the whole wide world  
May look and see and know.

(Found in a Canadian publication: Author unknown)

This poem was found in the Newsletter  
of the Organisation  
"FULL TIME MOTHERS"  
P.O.Box 186, London SW3 5RF  
~<http://www.fulltimemothers.org>:

I feel we should ALL, in EO, be members of this valuable organisation, and would urge you all to join (it's NOT expensive!). However, I also recognise that EO members (being very often full-time mothers in a much larger sense) could easily overwhelm FTM! ... and I feel it's very important that that should never happen, because FTM serves quite different, and extremely important, purposes ~ not least (a) that of attempting to restore Respect for the role of Motherhood and (b) an imperative assertion of the needs of babies and toddlers for full-time Mums rather than government-funded "Daycare" from the age of only a few months.

When EO began in the 1970s, and into the 1980s, most Mums were full-time at least until their youngest child was 5, and so for many EOers it was a progression from that position. This is now no longer the case (a fact which I find extremely distressing), and the need, therefore, for FTM is greater than it ever was. With fewer and fewer Mums being full-time up to "compulsory school-age", EO could be said to be losing a lot of potential recruits!! - other than those who come to us often in distress. FTM is fully aware of EO; I would like to keep it that way, but not invade it. I hope you'll join and support the wonderful team who are working hard to stop the rot!

### OUTGROWN

by Penelope Shuttle

It is both sad and a relief to fold so carefully  
her outgrown clothes and line up the little worn  
shoes

of childhood, so prudent, scuffed and particular.

It is both happy and horrible to send them  
galloping  
back tappity-tap along the misty chill path into the  
past.

It is both a freedom and a prison, to be outgrown  
by her as she towers over me as thin as a sequin  
in her doc martens and her pretty skirt,  
because just as I work out how to be a mother  
she stops being a child.

*Di Cox, Grey Row Cottage, St.Margaret South  
Elmham, Suffolk, IP20 0PL Tel: 01986.782315*

---

### OXFORD OPEN LEARNING

*I checked their website : [www.ool.co.uk](http://www.ool.co.uk) just a few days ago for comparison of GCSE course prices: it looks as though they are STILL cheaper than the NEC, even with the discount. And when my daughter used them a few years ago we were most impressed with their efficiency and friendliness.*

*Perhaps it pays to shop around ...*

*Anne Rix*

## ARTICLES

### Response to 'Pre-16s and College'

I must say I found the letter in last month's newsletter from Phil Hicks entitled 'Pre-16s and College' very interesting, especially the fact that he managed to get the LEA to fund Aimi's courses at college. My experience with my son here in the Warwickshire/West Midlands area has been somewhat different.

I started to try to get him a place in College at 14 in Coventry (as they offered specialised courses for dyslexics), but was unable to get the funding, which made the cost prohibitive when adding travel costs on top of it. He is now 15 and going part-time to just two classes at our local college here in Rugby Warwickshire. This I have had to pay *in full*, as he is under 16. The computer course he is on nobody normally pays for in full, as it is a subsidised course.

I have found colleges here largely open to him attending whilst under 16 providing they had met him, the tutor taking it agreed, and he came across as being suitable for the course (with one exception of a tutor who wouldn't, in principle, take anyone under 16 unless the parent did the course as well!). The main problem they had was that they couldn't secure any funding for him as he was under 16, so I had to pay in full unless I could get an LEA to fund him. This is why he has only taken two classes as it would cost me in the region of £4000 for him to do the full-time course in computers that he wanted to do and they were open to considering him for.

I had already approached the LEA for funding, but they basically have washed their hands of helping in any way. I was told they have *no* obligations to him, as I was totally responsible due to home-educating him – in other words he didn't exist. All they could suggest when I pursued it further was that I re-register him at school and then try. I do know of socially excluded children getting funding to go to college, but have been told you have to be registered at a school and then be very badly behaved or truanting to be entitled to the funding!

It seems so unfair as I already pay for him to go once a week to the Dyslexic Institute, which is very expensive. School never worked for him, so this means that I can't get any financial help towards any area of his education until he reaches 16. It is such a waste that children like ours can't just pursue what they want educationally when they are ready and able to do so, but have to wait and kill time until the government says they can do so.

Why is there so little flexibility in education?

*Nina Busch, 48 Oxford Street, Rugby, Warks CV21 3NE*

### GCSEs

I'd like to thank all those of you who took the time to send me information about your experience of GCSEs. Some of you sent very detailed information and it was very useful. The following is a summary of the information that you provided. Also included is some information on the exam boards.

In the past, many home-educators chose to do IGCSEs. However, from June 2003, they will no longer be open to candidates in the UK. Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) have made this decision as a result of the reduction in the number of centres available. The exam board

decided that it was unfair to allow students to study for qualifications, when there was little chance that they would be able to find a centre in which to sit them.

From June 2003, all GCSE exams will have coursework. However, all coursework must be validated by a person approved by the exam board. This person may not be a relative of the student. Their role is to confirm that the work is that of the student. Coursework is usually marked by the exam centre, rather than the board (specifications vary). However, you should check with your exam centre if they are willing to do this, and what the fee will be.

With regard to the actual coursework tasks, the exam boards can provide information in advance. This includes specimen coursework. It is also possible to get examples of previously submitted coursework. Some subjects require several pieces of work, some of which may be specified by the exam board, while others may be selected by the student. In both cases, the boards will give you guidance about how much help is permissible. Exam boards have subject officers who help with particular queries.

Several of the people who supplied information had used the National Extension College (Tel: 01223 450 500). They are quite expensive but everyone was very pleased with the service they received. They found that it took a lot of the stress out of sitting GCSEs at home as they dealt with a lot of the administration. In addition, they will validate coursework. I believe that they also give a discount if you take several subjects. The NEC will be running some special offers in October. I also heard from individuals who had used their local adult education college. Unfortunately, many colleges are still unaware of home education and you may find that you are the first person that they have dealt with. However, I have heard of colleges taking home-educated students as young as 11, although they may require an adult to stay with the student (usually until they are 14). Ironically, some colleges will accept under 16s who have been excluded (as part of their LEA's provision for excluded children), but they will refuse home-educators. Reasons given include "schools are provided for them" and "they are not insured for under 16s". This seems to be motivated by funding. However, I would suggest directing your enquiries to the Principal, preferably using their name. It may be that the person that you are being refused by is someone who is unfamiliar with your situation. They probably don't have the authority to change or make policy.

#### **Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA)**

This awarding body is a merger between NEAB and SEG (the northern and southern examining groups). It seems to be the most helpful to private candidates. A list of subjects which are open to private candidates will be available at the end of September. There will also be a direct number for the Private Candidates Department. The telephone number for this will be 0161 455 5482. AQA plan to provide information about centres which have accepted private candidates in the recent past. Of course, this will not guarantee that they will accept you, but this list should be a good starting point.

AQA will mark coursework, or it may be done by the centre, or a private tutor. You should check in advance, as different subjects may vary. A small number of candidates may be required to attend AQA's headquarters for an interview, authenticating their coursework.

#### **Edexcel Tel: 020 7393 4444**

Edexcel accepts private candidates for some subjects. However, you would have to make your own arrangements for having coursework marked. Centres have to include private candidates

with their own entries. The group does have an Open Centre in London for Maths (Option B) for the November sitting only. The closing date for entries is October 6<sup>th</sup> but the Centre fills up very quickly making early entry essential.

**Oxford and Cambridge Regional Examinations (OCR)** Tel: 01223 553998

OCR does not cater for private candidates. They advise candidates to approach an OCR centre directly to see if they are willing to accept their entry. This would include the marking of coursework. OCR will provide information about the location of centres in their area.

**Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)** Tel: 0131 663 6601

Only a small number of exams are available for private candidates.

**Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC)** Tel: 029 2026 5000

WJEC does not cater for private candidates. They also advise candidates to approach a centre directly to see if they are willing to accept their entry. The private candidate's entry is made along with the centre's own students.

**Please note that the (acting) E.O. contact for GCSEs is Geraldine Adams: 020 7263 4922**

*Gill Dove, 302 High Road, Chadwell Heath, Romford, Essex RM6 6AJ Tel: 020 8597 8537*

## Beach Combing

'Home Education' has always been a slightly misleading term because much of what happens takes place well away from home. It can also conjure up various images for non-home educators which may be pejorative: a lone child sitting looking bored at home, kept away from the world and with no friends; or a house full of wild children creating mayhem and a distraught parent trying to cope. As home educators know, neither is the case.

Perhaps a metaphor, inspired by the memories of the summer, might prove insightful. For my family, home education is quite like beachcombing. Imagine, what I hope is a familiar scene for many, a small child playing on a beach. Their curiosity, sense of fun and desire to explore leads them quite naturally to know what to do on this big beach. They run and jump, draw pictures in the sand, poke about in rock pools, run in and out of the water, fly kites, build sand-castles and look under rocks.

When my daughter's playing on the beach, she's connected to the world with all her senses. What she learns comes naturally and at her own pace. Some days she wants to pick up rocks and find out what's underneath. On other days picture making is the subject, or playing with other children and working out the rules of the game. She learns through all her activities because **experiencing** the world is the natural way to develop understanding.

### Looking under rocks

While at the beach, my daughter often picks up rocks to see if anything interesting is underneath. As we explore the pools and rocky coves, we turn over rocks and shout to each other to 'come see ...'. Sometimes the things under my rocks I find really interesting, but she will give it a quick glance and move on, and vice versa. Other times she and I will study what's revealed, trying to figure out what it is and why it's there. My greater experience and knowledge can be useful in providing explanations of what's under the rocks but sometimes it's new to me, so together we talk

about the characteristics it has, and sometimes we come up with our own name for it. She often spots things that I don't because I'm too busy trying to remember the names of things and looking at the world with tired eyes. Her fresh eyes don't have the expectations, filters, and need to explain which mine do, so she can actually see what's there, not just what's 'supposed' to be there.

The beach offers many different rocks to look under. My daughter isn't constrained to look under only the rocks that I think are important or interesting. I can say "*In my experience this type of rock often has great things under it*" and she will often give me the benefit and come and look. Sometimes she agrees with me and sometimes she says, "*What's so great about that?*"

Of course while we're at the beach we're not confined to looking under rocks. We can do all the things that make beaches such wonderful places. And all the time she's learning. If I were to insist that we keep looking under rocks all day, she would get bored, stop listening and not turn any of her own rocks over.

### **Schools Aren't Beaches**

In contrast with the beach, schools are funny places. In the past, someone, somewhere decided which rocks everyone should look under and, equally, which ones they shouldn't. However, rather than go to the beach and look under them, it is much more efficient to bring the rocks to a central place - the school. Unfortunately, this means that children are now stuck with looking under old rocks, collected a long time ago by someone else, which aren't in their natural place and so lack their normal relationship to the wider world. They have little left on their undersides: most of the interesting stuff was left behind at the beach when they were collected. From these rocks the children are told to imagine the vibrant world outside.

If the child asks why they must study these old rocks, they will be told that this is important 'learning', that it will make them clever and successful. Some children find it hard to understand how turning over rocks they haven't chosen, in which they have little interest, which are old and have bits on, will be useful in their lives to come. If they persist in this questioning they will be disciplined and quickly labelled a troublemaker. So they have to be compelled to attend school where they are sentenced to many years of 'hard labour' amidst the dusty rocks. To be fair, schools do try and smarten up their collection of rocks, even getting new ones in, or using audio/visual techniques to show what they look like in their natural setting. However, simply using better, more interesting rocks still leaves many other problems and it's a long way from actually being on the beach with the wind in your hair and sand between your toes.

Many children stare longingly out of the classroom window, while the teacher at the front talks on and on about the stuff which they believe is under that lesson's particular rock. The child remembers the great times - the fun, the joy, the kites and the sandcastles, the sea and the sun - of the last holiday, when they went to the beach. Life was full of excitement, rich with experience, and much was learnt.

### **Lots of ways to play at the beach**

Whilst some children are at their enforced rock-turning in schools, the home-educators are at the beach. Whatever the weather there's usually something to see and do and most days the 'beachcombers' come down to enjoy the ever-changing scene the real world offers.

Because people are different, beachcombers have a variety of styles they employ when they're at the beach. Some parents feel they (and their children) need some structure for at least some of the

day. You will see them diligently at work with their kids, turning over a succession of rocks. Others will have a particular interest in one area of the beach, or a specific activity and encourage their kids to enjoy and explore their passions with them. Others are more relaxed and see their role as simply getting everyone to the beach with the basics (challenge enough sometimes!). Once there, it's over to the kids to sort out what's on the programme today. However, after some serious relaxation they are always ready to join in a game of catch, to help launch a kite, to explore the pools and turn over some rocks when they are asked to.

As an adult I have experience of beaches and know some things about them that I'm keen to point out and share with my daughter. Together we explore, finding new things, old things, and washed-up things. At times I make suggestions about where to go on the beach where interesting things may be found. Mostly though, we explore together, with my daughter leading the way. Of course my partner and I are seen as responsible for making sure we have drinks, food, buckets, spades, kites, surf boards, frizzbees, balls etc. etc. available as required!

Often the best times, when most fun and interaction occurs, are when there's not much structure or too many restrictions. And it's great when we meet others and develop the world's best game of frizzbee or cricket, or play together in the sea.

Whatever the different ways of playing at the beach, most beachcombers will always find time to simply enjoy being there. The children will have time to explore as they desire and to meet and chat with the other folk on the beach that day. Learning becomes an on-going activity that applies to most things; it's not a discrete process that only takes place in one location, in one way and for a set time. It's fun, exciting, and rewarding, encouraging children to explore and question their world, to turn over the rocks that take their fancy and seek to explain what they find. The learning is based on actual experience and observation, and firmly rooted in the real world. On occasion the beachcombers take time-out away from the beach to experience other environments. Some days a cliff walk takes them further afield, on others the fog rolls in or the rain pelts down and it's good to stay warm indoors, watching the school-children from the house next-door struggling off to the bus-stop to spend the day at their labours.

Life's a beach: a rich and wonderful environment full of opportunities to play and learn – to experience, and thus to know. Who wants to go to school when you can go to the beach instead! Don't call me a 'home-educator', call me a beachcomber!  
(Anyone for another ice cream?)

*Martin Wise, Mill Beck, Linnet Grove, Kendal, LA9 7RP  
Tel: 01539 732918 E-mail: [martlakes@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:martlakes@dsl.pipex.com)*

### **Home Education – Warts and All!!!**

I recently found diary pages written in the early weeks and months of home-educating. If I hadn't read them, I wouldn't have recalled how tough life was then; a powerful need to prove I could 'do it', and that our 6 year old would be in no way disadvantaged by our decision to remove him from school, and a compulsion to explain and justify ourselves to anyone who would listen. We had been left in no doubt by the school of the gravity of our position and the impossible task we had taken on. The LEA would be keeping a close eye on us as we had committed a major crime. Home education was not fashionable, understood or healthy, we were deviants who officially did not exist. Our children would suffer terribly; they needed professionals not parents. We were on our own.

Unfortunately for me then, the magazine, the initial point of contact for many EO newcomers, only increased the sense of isolation. No-one seemed to feel as I did, everyone else was doing well. The pages were filled with letters from people who were nothing like our family and who had an entirely opposite perception of home-education and child-rearing to me. The local EO group though were supportive, but boys were in very short supply and as a family we did grow increasingly uncomfortable with the inevitable pro-female bias. The effort we made initially to mix with other EO families (the stick together policy), did fade as we gradually realised most 'normal' families also accepted us, even if they did think us strange, provided we also accepted and appreciated their school-orientated lifestyle. Life is far easier now, the children finding their own friends close to home.

Educating at home has been a success for us and we are very happy with how our children are developing, but it hasn't always been easy. Personalities do clash, children are defiant, I have got angry at times and threatened to send them to school, and all relationships can come under intense pressure. I never feel I give any of them enough attention (despite having a husband and not having a job), and at times feel far removed from the idyllic image of home education portrayed in the magazine. Am I really that untypical, despite the fact I've never felt unable to cope with the difficulties that have arisen? Or are others hiding the fact that there are problems because they feel the need to compete, to prove something to the rest of us, or to the outside world?

For us home education was not a 'forever' decision. We didn't know where it would take us. It is a 'now' existence and we are constantly balancing the school and home choices available with the ever changing needs of our children, and with what we believe to be in their best interests. Whilst we understand there can be some children who are completely suited to the HE lifestyle, there are some who may only benefit from it for a shorter period. Is it reasonable to say your child will never go to school? How can you ever know quite what is round the corner, how they will develop, how their needs will change?

My son now appears to be wanting more structure and greater challenges than I can offer at home. A tour round a prospective secondary school has satisfied us that we can no longer compete with what is on offer: specialist teaching, variety of subjects, sports, music, science and technology facilities, other adult influences, especially male etc. He is very keen to try it. Once there he will be able to compare this with home and come to his own conclusions about which path his education will take.

I wonder if boys do more quickly tire of an environment where Mum is the chief influence, is it healthy for confident, active males? It doesn't feel entirely natural for me, having older sons dependant on my limited skills and regularly around me - I just can't provide enough. Respect can be lacking when they naturally feel the need to experience more - to find out for themselves. The craft-based, quiet, content picture which appears to be the norm just doesn't figure for families whose children have little interest in anything except sport, physical activity and mixing with other boys.

It really is OK for a parent to realise that they cannot be all a child needs to become a healthy, well adjusted adult with a broad education. I haven't failed my child if he ends up in school. I believe I've done well to come this far although I do accept that there may be faults in my character or approach which may have caused us to run out of steam. (It may be necessary for a child to need to get away from his parents!) I can say though that I have done my best with a great deal of thought and effort. I do not feel a failure. Up to now home education has been the only way for all of us but we do also have the freedom to decide when it is time for a new approach. We are not trapped by any one way of living so we can do our best for each child individually.

There seem to be many in EO who believe they are doing their own thing, that they have freed themselves from the pressures of school. Yet, like it or not, it appears they have escaped from one set of beliefs to another: the EO way of educating the typical EO child. People do like to belong and there is comfort in numbers. No matter how much there is a claim EO accepts every approach (and I have no doubt it does), that diversity, individuality or openness of opinion in some cases, just doesn't exist. Are EO members really of one mind or does the organisation only attract or encourage a certain type of home educator?

As a member of EO originally, I have felt guilty by having a structured approach to some aspects of my children's education, even though it is the only way I can organise them all, produce the 'evidence' required and achieve certain standards I believe are important. I don't have any extraordinary talents or interests which my child can share, unlike many in EO, except a love of the outdoors and sport, so we basically concentrate on the subjects taught at school. It is difficult to believe that there are not more who agree in principle with school, perhaps with how it was 20 or 30 years ago before it became so competitive, who are trying to provide a similar sound basic education and who have annual inspections to bear in mind.

I have also felt guilty for being brought up to believe children need to know where they stand, that there are boundaries. They are not born knowing what's good for them or how to bring themselves up, they often need firm guidelines as well as a good example. School offered us neither. The EO children written about in the magazine are gifted, intelligent, perfect, whereas my own do fall out and hit each other, argue, shout and cry as well as having positive attributes. I do have to dole out punishments to 'offenders' on the occasions when they can't resolve their own differences. That is my family - imperfect, lively, noisy, challenging and happy. It feels perfectly normal to me even though such families don't feature in the magazine.

I've been out of contact with the magazine since 1998, and the general tone is unchanged. I had hoped it would have become better able to inspire and support all families and children turning to EO in desperation as they start out. After all it's those people who need what the magazine contains, it could make all the difference to them. Are there members who no longer feel the need to contribute and discuss their experiences and thoughts?

Does apathy set in after a while once your HE is up and running and do you no longer want to bother entering into debate over issues you have personally resolved, as you have moved on? Are we concerned at all that by not using the magazine as a vehicle for a variety of experience viewpoints, we are not helping or encouraging those setting out on a difficult, often lonely path?

Home education is a liberating, rewarding existence and is well worth the struggle; to escape from school, to find your own way, to meet your own child's needs. Praise and understanding will be in short supply but you will grow to need neither. For the sake of your children keep an open mind, be flexible and take each day as it comes. Congratulate yourself for every milestone you reach unaided by the system.

It is up to all the members who care about the future of EO but especially the children who rely on it, to shape the organisation through the magazine so everyone can feel they identify with other home educators. We can either sit back, content we are doing fine, or we can fill the pages with our own individual, honest viewpoints taken from real life. It is our choice!

*Helen Burton, 23 Lawrence Drive, Brinsley, Notts NG16 5AU*

## Advertisements

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 an appropriate donation. Cheques should be made payable to 'Education Otherwise'. Please remember that EO is run entirely by volunteers and has no income except members' subscriptions. Adverts should be limited to 1/8 page or 50 words and sent (with any donation) to the NL Co-ord.

**TO LET LONG-TERM:  
MORAY FIRTH, SCOTLAND  
SECLUDED 3/4 BEDROOM BUNGALOW**  
in approx. one acre mainly birch woodland. Double glazed with woodburning stove and oil CH. Organic garden (8 years), including raised beds, greenhouse and large poly-tunnel. Croy village 1 mile, Inverness 10 miles and 4 miles from Dalcross airport. For details call Pete or Ali on 0845 458 1588 or e-mail us: [pete@positiveconnections.co.uk](mailto:pete@positiveconnections.co.uk)

### THE NON-STOP READER

ALL YOU NEED FOR TEACHING YOUR CHILD TO READ  
Guidance for the parent at every stage  
Lively, entertaining, and wonderfully illustrated  
Progressive and fully phonic  
Can become a favourite book  
£18.50 (UK POST FREE)  
FOR BOOK AND EXERCISE PACK  
For ordering or for further information contact  
*Non-Stop Books, 26 Lathbury Road, Oxford OX2  
7AU 01865-554953*  
*nonstopbooks@compuserve.com*  
*website: www.nonstopbooks.co.uk*

### ENERGY CONSERVATION PRODUCTS NATURAL HEALTHCARE PRODUCTS

Well-established British company  
- World leader -  
on BT's list of visionary companies.  
**Money-back Guarantee.**  
Business Opportunity also available.  
For Brochure contact: Penny Cann  
17 Thorntondale Road, Doncaster,  
South Yorkshire, DN5 8SL  
Or Tel. 01302 784214

### FOR SALE - VARIETY OF TAPES (AUDIO AND VIDEO)

- French/German language
  - English & Communication
  - Physical Education (assessing performance)
  - Administration and Higher Administration
  - Music (advice on composing) (improvising within performing)
- All going cheap. Please telephone M. Steenson 01387 256209 if interested.

### CHILDREN'S HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Unaccompanied Children's Holidays  
in little North Devon village  
close to beautiful beaches  
Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks &  
Eden Project nearby.  
Lots of Fresh Air & Home Cooking!  
Visit our WebSite or Tel: 01271 831467  
We are long time Home Educators  
with 2 boys At home aged 12 & 16  
**20% Discount for HE kids out of season**  
Booking now for 2003  
[www.childrens-happy-holidays.co.uk](http://www.childrens-happy-holidays.co.uk)

### NatureKids

Part / Full Time Education with an  
emphasis on Learning through Experiences,  
Home from Home and time in 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.

Services and products advertised on this page 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.

## More Advertisements

### 'THINGS TO DO'

Catalogue for Kids

CRAFTS PUZZLES GAMES MATHS  
SCIENCE GEOGRAPHY LANGUAGE ETC.

We have an ever expanding range  
of motivating Workbooks and Kits

We **HAD** to include these: classic  
steel Pedal Cars (ages 3 - 5)

Ashtree Marketing

01420 82545

PO Box 153

Alton GU34 1WA

### LeCardo

Help your children learn word-building,  
simple arithmetic and teamwork with  
LeCardo, the new card-based word game.  
Suitable for 2-4 players aged from 10 to  
adult. Only £9.99 (inc. P&P).

Like word games? You'll LOVE LeCardo!

020 7278 1269 [www.lecardo.com](http://www.lecardo.com)

### 'LIFECOACHING'

A free consultation is  
followed by work by phone,  
email or (if required)  
face-to-face.

Payment, if at all, is  
appropriate to circumstances.

My objective is for you not  
to need me. Contact me in  
the first instance at:

Lifecoach, PO Box 33688

London N16 7XT

## Notices

### The Open School address change

We have received several enquiries from  
your members but addressed to our old  
address. Please would you change your  
database to show our new location:

The Open School  
Norden House  
Kingsbridge  
Devon, TQ7 3LG

### FOR SALE

'Ginn' Star Science Scheme

Years 3 and 4 combined

Cost £160 Will sell for £55

'Ginn' New Abacus Maths Schemes

Year 3 - Cost £180 Will sell for £60

Everything necessary for learning at home

'Ginn' New Password English Schemes

Year 3 - Cost £150 Sell for £50

Everything necessary for learning at home

Plus various other 'bits'

Tricia McDonald Tel: 01273 418222

## Wanted

### RURAL RETREAT

Leicester couple with three  
young children desperately  
need to rent a house to  
escape violently abusive  
neighbours. We will consider  
anything, anywhere, but  
prefer quite (rural) area.  
We have deposit and month's  
rent.

Call Iain or Jackie  
(0116) 29 11 024

Services and products advertised on this page  
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.

## **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 - **BY LETTER OR EMAIL PLEASE** - to: **Anne Rix NL Co-ord** (see inside back page) until further notice.

### **BATH**

H.E.L.P. group meets regularly for outings and activities. Contact: Louise Jensen 01225 840735

### **BEDFORDSHIRE**

For full details of events programme in Bedford and other areas of the County

Contact June McDonald 01234 341375 or email [june.mcdonald@btinternet.com](mailto:june.mcdonald@btinternet.com)

Egyptian theme to current (autumn) term, science theme to spring term: lots of craft, science talks/workshops, visits to Leicester Space Centre, Science Museum, planned. Also regular swimming, multi-sport, softplay and chat sessions in Bedford and other areas.

### **BERKSHIRE**

E-mailing list for home educators in Berkshire and surrounding areas for events/activities <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BerkshireHomeEducators>  
Woolinks Leisure Centre **Burghfield** Mondays 1pm. Tuesdays swimming at **Windsor** 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 9862123  
Heros Club Holyport **Maidenhead**. Mondays 10-3 Regular sports, dancing, pottery crafts and cooking. £25 month or £10 family/day.

Contact: Dawn 01628 783107 (Also for local newsletter) [www.zednetdemo.co.uk/2eddin](http://www.zednetdemo.co.uk/2eddin)  
**Newbury** group on Fridays for younger children. Contact: Gillian 01491 671328

**Lambourne**. Weekly meeting on a farm for crafts, cooking and nature walks, group based on respect for each other and our world and an unhurried childhood. Contact: Tracey or Roge 01793 610448 [roge.tracey@virgin.net](mailto:roge.tracey@virgin.net)

**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

### **BRISTOL**

Thursdays meeting at St Paul's Adventure Playground 1-3pm; Spanish, Science and Pottery happening on a regular basis

Contact: Carla 9354389

Email list for Bristol and surrounding areas at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BristolHomeEducation>

Also local group website for more information about home education in Bristol: [www.bristolhomeeducation.org.uk](http://www.bristolhomeeducation.org.uk)

### **BUCKS**

Newsletter for Bucks/Northants

Contact: Dawn 01908 569380

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

South Bucks: fortnightly meetings for craft, activities, play, speakers, drama, trips etc.

Contact: Jackie 01753 886924

Dorothy 01494 782864

### **CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

Cambridge regular meetings and outings.

Contact: Penny 01223 526441

[penny.k@ntworld.com](mailto:penny.k@ntworld.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](mailto:SJLambert@aol.com)

Cambridge/Norfolk border: fortnightly meeting at Guyhim.

Contact: Pat 01354 656582 or Ruth 01945 861464

### **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**

Free events sheets every two months via Email or SAEs. Contact: Anna Wheeler, Cambrose Farm,

Redruth, TR16 4HT 01209 890378

Or [Annawheeler@cambrose.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:Annawheeler@cambrose.fsnet.co.uk)

Local information on our local home ed website: [Homeedinkernow.tripod.com](http://Homeedinkernow.tripod.com)

### **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 group meets every Wed. 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

Devon Newsletter, full details of events throughout the County: E-mail copies free; £3.00 for 6 months by post. Contact Kate and Elsie

01392 851370 or email [katefernhill@aol.com](mailto:katefernhill@aol.com)

NATIONAL TRUST (Devon) - Card held by Nick

Vidal-Hall (01548 830716) gives free

membership/entry to NT sites to all Devon EO

members for pre-booked 'educational' visits.

### East and Mid Devon:

Local Contact Becca 01404 549479

Lots of varied activities - see Devon newsletter

(above) for full details.

### North Devon

Local Contact: Amanda 01237 422403

Bideford area Fortnightly social meetings on

Tuesdays. Ring Louise 01237 441786

### South Devon

Local Contact Bridget 01803 862158

Weekly social meeting, Weds pm. Venue has plenty of outside play space. £1.00 per family.

Contact Bridget 01803 862158

Totnes. Teenagers weekly meeting on Thursdays

2.30pm to 6pm. 12 yrs+. £3.00 per young person..

Contact Nick 01548 830716 (adults) Young people

contact Arran and Willow 01548 830716

Brixham. Regular meetings on Tuesdays. Contact

Sally 01803 856862

## DEVON EAST/DORSET WEST

Lyme Regis, Axminster, Bridport, Chard

Contact Ann 01297 561070

Or Habiba 0845 4582984 (local rate)

## DORSET

Regular meetings, keep in touch

Contact: Christine 01258 880355

Rosemary 01747 853 593

Bournemouth area: Meeting every Monday for

crafts, games, play etc. Friendly, welcoming group.

Contact: June 01202 827945,

[bugchick@btinternet.com](mailto:bugchick@btinternet.com)

## 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](mailto: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

**Gloucester** meetings & swimming

Contact Dawn 01452 540019

[dawnandmike@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:dawnandmike@blueyonder.co.uk)

Tracy 07941 612092

## HAMPSHIRE

**Portsmouth** EO. Warm and friendly group meet

Thursdays for art, craft, music, chat and outings.

Contact: Kirsten on 02392 428 952, or email

[kasturi@isitveggie.com](mailto:kasturi@isitveggie.com).

ACTIVEEO meet 3 times a week within 25 miles of

**Petersfield**. All welcome. Contact: 01428 712394

FAREGOS HE Group meet weekly at Holbrook,

**Gosport**, for swimming or skating, weekly in

**Fareham** for crafts and other activities. Other

outings on an ad hoc basis. Friendly, welcoming

group. Contact Gayle 01329 82-3112.

Email [Gayle@v21mail.co.uk](mailto:Gayle@v21mail.co.uk) for more details.

**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](mailto:Michelle.virgo@il2.com)

**Farnham/Aldershot** area. Friendly group for under

10s, weekly meetings/outings/activities

Contact: Emma 01252 350034

[emmajevons@supanet.com](mailto:emmajevons@supanet.com)

## HEREFORDSHIRE

1st Monday of month for meetings, various venues.

Contact: Kath and Malcolm 01432 830883

[homed@appcs.co.uk](mailto:homed@appcs.co.uk)

## HERTFORDSHIRE

TOP Health and Education Together. Drumming +

all ages groups/individuals every Tuesday.

Numeracy, literacy and parenting health sessions.

Literacy home study program 3-10 years. All at

Bentley Heath Barnet. Also Friday Fun Afternoon

every week Contact: Priscilla 01438 840674

[olsandpjs@aol.com](mailto:olsandpjs@aol.com)

Casual Swimming Friday morning, term time only at

North Herts Leisure Centre, Letchworth. Meet in

the pool 9.00am - 9.15am cost 60p per person on

production of EO/HEAS card.

Contact: Priscilla Simmons (as above)

or Karen Bartlett 01462 743034

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

*(more I.o.W over page)*

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

**new** local group, **East Kent** including Dover, Canterbury and all surrounding areas.

Contact Heather on 01227 370822 or email [slimeheva@eurobell.co.uk](mailto:slimeheva@eurobell.co.uk) for an up to date activities list.

#### Medway towns

Contact: Bridget 01634 234938

#### Tunbridge Wells

Contact: Kim 01892 863941

French for beginners through songs and games.

Yoga for children.

Contact: Katherine 01892 863958

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

#### Bromley

Contact: Claire 0181 460 7347

[Claire@wadefamily99.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:Claire@wadefamily99.freeserve.co.uk)

**SE Kent** : new group at the Ravensbourne Community 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

or Angela 01204 659634

#### LEICESTERSHIRE

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

#### LINCOLNSHIRE

Weekly meeting in Cleethorpes

Contact: Caroline 01472 690738

Lincoln group: For list of events contact

Gill 01205 871399, Louise 01522 533582

Kathleen 01522 869239

#### LONDON

**Walthamstow** Fridays 2-3.30pm

Contact: Kate 020 8520 2676

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 Kidbrooke

Contact: Fiona 020 8852 9756

[bettleslake@clara.net](mailto:bettleslake@clara.net)

Fridays fortnightly at Sydenham 11.30-2.30

Contact: Chrystia and Keith 8776 8597

Fridays alternate fortnight Forest Hill Nature Reserve 11.30

Contact: Dave 8692 4080

**NW London** Otherwise Club

Contact: Leslie 0208 969 0893

**Harrow** every other Friday plus swimming

Thursdays and other stuff.

Contact: Sue 0771 802 2677

Vivienne [TIMSHARKEY@aol.com](mailto:TIMSHARKEY@aol.com)

**W. London** HE group every Tuesday for social and educational activities and visits.

Contact: Claire Evans 0208 943 4491

[timesteps@freeserve.co.uk](mailto:timesteps@freeserve.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 12pm.

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](mailto: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](mailto:wilson-net@lineone.net)

MADCOW newssheet, send SAEs : Gill Wilson,

20 Brook Rd, Heaton Chapel, Stockport SK4 5BZ

Computing Skills 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,

Croswick, Norwich NR12 7BD

Workshops/social meetings 1st and 3rd Thursday

Contact: Sue 01603 738494

#### NORFOLK/SUFFOLK BORDER

Term-time, every Tuesday 2.30 - 4.30

Swimming, indoor sports/play at Breckland Leisure

Centre, **Thetford**. Contact Fay 01953 681785

#### 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 meetings. 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

## SHROPSHIRE

Activities and outings Contact: Val 01952 502225  
South Shrops. regular meetings every Tuesday,  
outings and workshops.  
Contact: Carolyn 01588 680503

## SOMERSET

**Frome** and beyond (FAB) home educators support  
group. Social gatherings, outings and newsletter.  
Contact: Sally 01749 841554  
Helen 01373 465260  
**Wiveliscombe** - new

meeting on the 1st Tuesday of the month (term time)  
at Scout Hut 10.30-13.30  
Contact: Maggie 01984 624 651  
**SOMERSET NORTH** - new group  
Regular get-togethers and activities  
Contact: Sarah 01275 842300  
or e-mail hegns **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  
**Fife**: Friday fortnightly meetings, activities and social  
get-togethers. All welcome. Contact: Nicola 01334  
478530 nicola.stubbs@btinternet.com  
**Irvine**: For details of regular and one-off activities  
please contact: Rhona 01294 273644  
or Shirley 01563 540063 or Vivien 01563 537428  
**Highlands meetings** Fortnightly meetings in  
Inverness, plus occasional outings. All ages  
welcome. Contact: Rebecca 01667 462772 or  
Alison 01463 232571@btopenworld.com  
**STAFFORDSHIRE/SOUTH CHESHIRE/NORTH SALOP**  
**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.  
Contact: Helen Burnett 01737 243606

Friendly group for under 10s, weekly meetings/  
outings/activities. **Farnham/Aldershot** area.  
Contact: Emma 01252 350034  
emmajeavons@supanet.com

## SUSSEX

**Monthly newsletter** £8pa or £4 six months,  
cheques payable to "ESEO" to Ian Lawes, 35  
Waldegrave Rd, Brighton, BN1 6GR  
Contact: (Vacant) (East Sussex)  
Isobel 01403 261178 (West Sussex)

**Lindfield** EO Friday club, contact Liz 01444 414058

**Hastings Area** Home Educators, regular arts, craft,  
gym, outings and meetings.  
Contact: Ali 01424 814175

**Eastbourne** Home Educators Club, alternate  
Fridays 9.30-11.30 Shinewater Community Centre  
75p per child. Contact: Angelique 01323 509702

**Worthing**: Thursday morning group 10-12.30.

Many different activities and outings last Thursday of  
each month. Contact: Sam Kruger 01903 233799

## TYNESIDE

Monthly art sessions at the Laing Art Gallery - for  
children over 6. Contact: Lilian 0191 456 7007  
lavendereco@aol.com  
Regular outings, visits, etc. Contact: Becky 0191  
478 5322 beckyfeeney@hotmail.com

## WALES

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

Contact: Dawn 01452 540019  
dawnandmike@cableinet.co.uk  
Contact: Beverley 02920 797628  
Bev1.French@btinternet.com

**Swansea** monthly meetings in Llanelli area  
Contact: Sue 01269 861902

**Swansea/South West Wales** group meet regularly  
for swimming, group activities, social events and  
support. All ages, network of 30-40 families over  
wide area. Contact Geraldine 01792 405894  
or Juliet chestnut1@ntlworld.com

**Pembrokeshire** EO swim and sauna:

Haverfordwest pool, Dew St. 3pm at main reception,  
now fortnightly. Call to check dates.

Contact: Yvette 0845 458 9251

**Cardigan** area social meetings and outings on

**Mondays** - Contact: Yvette 0845 458 9251

**Gwynedd** Mondays swimming at Bangor

Contact: Louisa 01248 361254

Friday swimming at Porth Madog Weekly meetings  
at Tremadog Thursdays. Contact Jo 01766 512330

**NE Wales/Borders** weekly gym/trampolining in  
Wrexham (Thurs) various meetings in Oswestry,  
W. Cheshire/NE Wales. Also sports and ice skating  
at Deeside Leisure Centre.

Contact: Genny 01978 757489  
49 Westminster rd, Moss Valley, Wrexham

LL11 6DH - £2 for a years listing.

eo@7times7.freemove.co.uk

## 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

Meetings, trips out, activities etc are held throughout each month at a variety of locations all over the West Midlands. The newsletter HELM lists many of them. HELM is available free by email or by post for a small charge and covers HE related articles and events throughout the West Midlands and surrounding areas.

Contact: Joy Beasley 0121 585 6450

JoyBeasley@b-bunch.freemove.co.uk

Penny Clarke 01922 745465

pennyclarke@blueyonder.co.uk

## 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

**Calne:** informal activities and get-togethers

Contact: Heather 01249 822 830

Last Thursday of the Month The Scout Hut, Southbroom Rd Devizes, 11.30-14.30, games, activities, support and socializing.

Outings most Thursdays

Contact: Janet 01249 818672

email: janet.eldekvis@bopenworld.com

Jemima: 01380 727470 Helen: 01249 822958

www.geocities.com/wiltshirehomeed/index.htm

## WORCESTERSHIRE

Local Contact - Rachel 01527 597809

Meetings - Karen Raybould 01527 835384

Meetings - North Worcs/Kidderminster - Gail

Tutcher 101562 822034 gail@tqmi.co.uk

Meetings, events, trips out etc happening all through the month throughout the county.

## 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 a quarterly newsheet

Contact: Alison 01405 769902

## YORKSHIRE SOUTH

Regular meetings for arts/crafts, visits, swims, hanging out and more. Contact: Jo 01709 820866

Denise 01226 733478 Gary 0114 2585702.

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

Fiona 0114 22751142

## 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 at West Park Centre,

Spenneth Lane, Classroom 9.

Contact: Susan 0113 2688304

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

\*\*\*\*\*

## LOCAL CONTACT UPDATE

### New acting local contacts

Devon North - Amanda Barrud

(new tel. No. 01237 422403)

Cumbria - Lianne Smith 016977 42455

Yorkshire North - Karen Sanderson

### Resigning local contacts

Jill and Peter Fisher - Leicester City

Celia McDonagh - Glamorganshire

Louise Hardy - Lancashire

Mary Trimble - Cumbria

Steev Stamford - Derbyshire

Helen Mason - Yorkshire North

### Areas needing a local contact

Bedfordshire

Isle of Man

Northern Ireland

Powys

Strathclyde

Surrey

Sussex East

Tayside

*And those listed on left as resigning*

### If you want to volunteer

or are interested to know more about the job of being a Local Contact

please contact Keith Charlton, 2 Wistow Rd, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire, LE8 0FT

0116 259 2118 lucy.charlton@care4free.net

(see also EO Handbook pp 28-30 - AR)

## Education Otherwise Adverts

### Resources Booklet

50 page booklet giving information on different curriculum materials aimed at 5-11 year olds available to home educators who are interested in a more structured approach.

Send £1 coin with your address to:  
H. Turnbull, Hadlow House, 2, Hadlow Rd,  
Sidcup, Kent DA14 4AF  
Or get a free RTF copy by e-mail  
henrietta.turnbull@ntlworld.com

### Resources for Older Children

Information on curriculum materials for later years. For a copy please send 60p to cover printing and postage with your address to: G. Dove, 302, High Road, Chadwell heath, Romford, Essex RM6 6AJ  
Free e-mail copy from:  
gillchris@willrich.fsnet.co.uk

### EO Car Stickers

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

### EO Hoodies and Mugs

Hooded sweatshirts with the triangle logo and the letters SINC are now available in navy blue and black in children's and adult sizes (£12 for children's and £20 for adults' including postage and packaging).

EO 25th anniversary mugs are also available in white and red with a picture of Archie (£5 including postage and packaging).

If you are interested in the above please contact Jill.Fisher@care4free.net or ring at 0116 212 8120 for further details.

### EO T-shirts:

Good quality cotton printed with logo in choice of two designs:

1. white shirt with E.O. logo  
(red triangle kicked open by running children)
2. navy shirt with white slogan:  
"home education - a real option"

£5 adult (M, L, XL)  
£3.50 child (3/4, 5/6, 7/8, 9/11, 12/13)  
Add p&p up to 6 shirts £2, 7+ £4  
Cheques payable to E.O.Trading Ltd.  
Pat Connor, 2 Whitegates Lane, Reading,  
Berks., RG6 1ED

---

## MEMBERS PLEASE HELP SPREAD THE EO WORD

Too many people still do not know that School Is Not Compulsory

You can request Leaflets to slot into Display Stands  
in Libraries, Advice Centres, Surgeries, Cafes, Sports Centres ... Anywhere!  
(See inside back cover or email Ali Willer at <simon.whitehall@tesco.net>)

LET'S INCREASE BOTH MEMBERSHIP AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

---

## EO Email Lists

The EO Business list discusses the organisation and policies of Education Otherwise and it is hoped that this will develop into a useful forum involving members of the organisation. If you would like to know more of what is going on in EO, then this list could be the forum for you.

The list is open only to EO members (memberships will be regularly checked to ensure that the list members are still members of EO) and only for the discussion of EO business. (General HE discussion can take

place on the EO general list, which can be accessed via the website at [www.education-otherwise.org](http://www.education-otherwise.org))

To join the business list: Go to: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/eobusiness>  
Or send a blank email to: [eobusiness-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:eobusiness-subscribe@yahoo.com)  
You will receive an automatic response from Yahoo asking for your full name and address. When you have responded and your membership has been checked as valid, you can be added to the list.

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@

### 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, Iris Harrison, Jo Borthen

**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, 169 Habershon Street, Splott, Cardiff CF24 2LA 0776 321 3851

### Media Contacts

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

**Scotland:** Alison Sauer 01463 232571

**North West:** Marina Orme 019467 28313  
[marinaatthelakes@aol.com](mailto:marinaatthelakes@aol.com)

**North East:** Eva O'Rourke 01535 274520  
[evaandmary@aol.com](mailto:evaandmary@aol.com)

**Midlands:** Helen Donaldson 01889 882043  
[serf@unappreciated.co.uk](mailto:serf@unappreciated.co.uk)

**Wales:** Celia McDonagh 0776 321 3851  
[celiamcdonagh@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:celiamcdonagh@yahoo.co.uk)

**East Anglia:** Ali Willer 01603 401020  
[simon.whitehall@tesco.net](mailto:simon.whitehall@tesco.net)

**South West:** Belinda Harris-Reid 01364 643343  
[bharrisreid@aol.com](mailto:bharrisreid@aol.com) + [blinedata@aol.com](mailto:blinedata@aol.com)

**South East:** Karen Ingelbrecht 01303 254787  
[pencraft@ukonline.com](mailto:pencraft@ukonline.com)

**London(1):** VACANT) *Volunteers needed please!!*

**London(2):** VACANT) *Volunteers needed please!!*

**Ireland:** VACANT) *Volunteers needed please!!*

**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)**

## 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 (Glocs) 01608 812411 (*new tel.*)  
(*New Email: martine-frampton@maculimited.net*)  
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 (Berks) 0118 961 4466  
Jacqui Houlding (Cheshire) 01925 654856  
(*NB new Email: jc\_houlding@onetel.net.uk*)  
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  
All Willer (East Anglia) 01603 401020

### Membership

*Membership and newsletter subscription enquiries, membership cards and address changes:*

Administrator, Education Otherwise,  
5 Goodyers, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 2SH  
<<mailto:database@education-otherwise.org>>  
*For other queries or missing newsletters contact*  
Lynda Hitchman  
[database@education-otherwise.org](mailto:database@education-otherwise.org)  
or Phone 0118 961 4466

### Stationery

Leaflets, posters, membership forms, car stickers:  
All 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:  
Bridget Elgie, 14 Elizabeth Crescent, Bay Vista,  
Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 6JQ 0845 4582075  
[bidelge@aol.com](mailto:bidelge@aol.com) (please ring to check availability  
of items before ordering)

Website and email lists: Jacqui Houlding,  
01925 654856, [jc\\_houlding@onetel.net.uk](mailto:jc_houlding@onetel.net.uk)

### Contact with LEA

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

### EO Home Education Cards

Extra cards are available from:

EO HE Cards, 5 Ridge Way, Aldridge, Walsall  
WS9 0HL. Please send a stamped, addressed envelope  
plus 1 x loose 2<sup>nd</sup> class stamp for each card required.

### 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

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

**College Contact:** Kathy Chilton 01969 623707  
(*retiring - volunteers please!!*)

**GCSE Contact (acting):** Geraldine Adams 0207 263 4922

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

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

**Research Contact:** Pam Vickers 25 Boxley Rd,  
Walderslade, Chatham, Kent Home: 01634 671507  
Work: 01227 712206

**Company Secretary:** 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  
[garryhumphreys@lineone.net](mailto:garryhumphreys@lineone.net)

**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 VACANT - VOLUNTEERS?**  
(*temporary, acting*): Keith Charlton 2 Wistow Rd,  
Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire, LE8 0FT 0116 259 2118  
[lucy.charlton@care4free.net](mailto:lucy.charlton@care4free.net)

**Enquiries Secretaries Coordinator:** Iris Harrison  
01584 781341

**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

