

# education otherwise



NEWSLETTER  
OCTOBER & NOVEMBER 1990  
ISSUE No. 76

*Rob Weale on  
telling the left  
← their  
powers*

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**DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS:  
NOVEMBER 1st, 1990**

Please send contributions for the next newsletter to the editor marked clearly "FOR PUBLICATION", including your full name, address and telephone number on each submission sent.

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1. Please submit before the deadline.
2. Please write or type your material clearly and indicate if you do not wish your contribution to be retyped otherwise the editor will retype and make minor corrections of spelling, punctuation etc. Material of the wrong size, faint print etc. may have to be retyped

anyway.

3. If you are referring to a previous article or letter, please include reference of newsletter number and date.
4. Feel free to make suggestions about articles you would like to see in the newsletter or supplements.

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## A plea for contributions

A couple of E.O.ers I have spoken to have implied that the reason for their not writing articles is not so much because they have nothing to say, as because it might be considered immodest, or even vulgarly pushy(!). As a newish member, I would like to ask all of you more experienced E.O.ers (as well as everyone else) to please not feel like that, and please contribute to the newsletter. You may feel that you have said your piece ages ago, and that there is no point in repeating yourself, but for some of us, contributions about your practical experience of home education, and the things you have learnt from it, would be immensely useful and interesting.

With this in mind, here are some questions! (I suggest that you answer just one or possibly two questions *per newsletter* rather than all of them in one huge article, which would cause a future editor a few problems!) Your answers may themselves cause others to ask further questions, which should hopefully generate further contributions.

### Questions

- ◆ What are your reasons for home educating?
- ◆ What is your approach, e.g. 'structured'?
- ◆ What happens in practice?
- ◆ Has your educational philosophy changed?
- ◆ Have you any interesting examples of how your child has learnt about something?
- ◆ If you have an unstructured, autonomous-learning approach, have you found that your children tend to have large gaps in their knowledge (such as maths)? If so, what, if anything, have you done about it?
- ◆ If you have a structured approach, how much time is spent teaching and studying?
- ◆ Can you recommend any particular 'educational' books which your children have found interesting (especially about maths?)
- ◆ What if the children want to go to school? What if their reasons for this are 'bad'?
- ◆ If your children were taken out of school, how have they changed since?
- ◆ Did you take your first/only child to the usual

Mother and Toddler groups, baby-gym, and play groups? If not, is your child shy?

- ◆ If you have more than one child, how did you deal with sibling rivalry, fighting and so on?
- ◆ What comments and criticisms do you get from people about the fact that your children do not go to school, and how do you answer?
- ◆ If your child is intending to do exams, how are you going about this in practice?
- ◆ If your child was a late reader, how have you managed to avoid trouble with the L.E.A?
- ◆ If the Labour Party's plans for extending the National Curriculum to home educated children become law, what will you do?
- ◆ What question(s) do *you* have?

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# School-induced anxiety

Children who are the victims of school bullies have their vitality and energy sapped, and may become too frightened to attend school.

Authority figures in the school, education welfare department, and child guidance clinic are unlikely to tell parents of such a child that there is the option of home education.

With the implementation of the new Children Act, it should be impossible for children in this situation to be taken into care as they have been in the past. However, there is no instruction in the Children Act for parents of children in this situation to be informed of their right to home education.

Although it will become impossible for children to be taken into care for non-attendance at school, it will still be possible for them to be placed in psychiatric units or residential schools, without a care order. It will also be possible for them to be taken into care if they are labelled as "out of parental control".

It is important that information about so-called 'school phobia' and the alternative of home education should be available in public libraries. Please will you order my two books from

your public library: *The Abuse of Care and Custody Orders, and Understanding School Phobia and Troubled children: A Fresh Look at School Phobia*, published by Self Publishing Association, Lloyds Bank Chambers, Upton-on-Severn, Worcs. This will make them more freely available as libraries buy them. At present, there are too many copies of these books in storage, and not enough in libraries.

To those who ordered a copy of *Troubled Children* during the last year, I am sorry that there has been an inevitable price increase after reprinting, but members of E.O. should be able to buy discounted copies through E.O.

In answer to Lesley James (August/September 1990 newsletter 75, page 32), children who have been removed from school because of acute school-induced anxiety may take anything from a few days to several months to overcome their fears. In the group in my study, only two children had not overcome their fear of people at the end of three years, and one of them overcame her fears during the following year. I never received information about the third. The length of time they remained frightened probably

reflects the extent to which they were damaged by the school system. Be gentle with a child who has been badly damaged by the system.

I think that most so-called "mood changes due to puberty" are probably nothing of the sort. They are probably caused by the sudden change from the environment of a small school into an enormous institution, and are stress reactions. Puberty forms a good smoke screen behind which to hide the reality. It also gives prestige and power to the psycho-'experts' whose theory it is.

I am trying to collect information about 100 children who were home educated following a crisis when they refused to go to school. So far, I have followed up 43 children at three years after the school crisis. If there are any other families whose children fell into this category three years ago, please will you send me a short summary of the school crisis and the child's subsequent development, including whether he or she has decided to return to school at any time.

**Patricia Knox  
Pen Llywenan,  
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Holyhead,  
Gwynedd  
LL65 4TS  
Wales**



## **NEWS FROM THE TRUSTEES OF THE CHARITABLE TRUST**

There has been a certain amount of concern expressed recently about the trust funds and we felt it might be useful to outline what we are planning to use these funds for.

We feel that a major function of the trust is to publicize a parent's right to educate a child outside the school system. To this end we are planning to have printed an information leaflet that will outline this right and include a resource list of relevant books and organizations. These are intended for placing in libraries, C.A.B.s and the like. At the moment we are waiting for the new E.O. central address and phone number to be finalized so that the information will be as up to date as possible.

A second idea we are currently investigating is that of producing some sort of display material that will be available on loan, to place in libraries, use at fairs, and so on. We would hope to include basic information regarding parents' rights, but also to produce something visually attractive to catch the eye, with suitable photographs or similar. Any suggestions about this would be very welcome. Get in touch with

**Lesley Kilbride or  
Bruce and Christine Wallace.**

# Doing G.C.S.E. at home

Over the past couple of years we have been exploring was of doing G.C.S.E. at home. We have discovered that it is possible, but not always straightforward. Tim (15) and Abi (13) clearly want to end up with jobs that require formal qualifications, so we decided that they would try to take G.C.S.E.s. Rather than spin out the work over two years we chose to concentrate effort over a number of months, but taking less than the usual six to ten subjects.

Because our local (walking distance) comprehensive school is officially a "community school" and already welcomes adults to take classes alongside other pupils, we thought it might stretch to accepting our children as well, on a similar basis. That hurdle was easily overcome. The school suggested that we register our children (to obtain the capitation fee and to enter them for the exams as internal candidates) while allowing us to say when they would attend (for Biology practicals only!). Excellent and thoughtful teachers encouraged and supported our efforts.

## The subjects we chose

One question always asked is how to achieve practical skills in science at home? As every E.O.er knows, lots of practical science does actually occur,

but for G.C.S.E. it does have to meet certain criteria. We started with Biology. Mick, the teacher, lent us a correspondence course, which gave us a framework, and he suggested we use what turned out to be a splendid text: *Biology for life* by M.B.V. Roberts (Nelson 1986). It includes lots of experiments and ideas; recommended even if you are not doing G.C.S.E. Mick was all enthusiasm, related well to Tim and Abi, and passed on lots of revision notes and ideas he had used with his regular pupils.

English presented a few more difficulties as the school follows a mode involving 100% course-work. This meant that we had to play teacher, grading Tim's and Abi's written work. As it turned out, again we had a lot of support, and soon got the hang of the kinds of standard required. Although Tim and Abi had not done a lot of lengthy written composition before, they rose to the occasion. Reluctant at first, but later finding more facility, they produced evaluations of poetry and prose and also their own creative writing. Tim excelled on descriptions of skateboard techniques and of repainting his mountain bike. Because they could use typewriter or word-processor, handwriting was not a problem (and

on the latter they could make multiple corrections before submitting work). They took both Language and Literature.

By the way, be encouraged even if your child does not seem to want to write anything - Tim and Abi had not either. We reckon that talking together, as E.O.ers do, has paid off: progress in writing was rapid once the motivation was there.

Religious Studies was not quite such plain sailing. In fact we had tried and given up during the previous year. The thought of producing three 2,000 word essays was daunting, and the teacher was not as supportive either. However, some Sikh friends gave us some good ideas and contacts for that part of the course, and we had a very illuminating synagogue visit in Leeds. For the Christian part we used our own church friends. They also had to sit an exam, which was all pretty factual and counted for 70%.

We could not use the school for maths, due to their particular G.C.S.E. mode, so we enquired of the L.E.A., who gave permission for Tim to use the maths workshop in the local technical college. He found the workshop tutors very helpful, and took a mid-range

G.C.S.E. this summer.

The previous four subjects were taken by both Tim and Abi this year. Last year, when our experiment with the school began, they each took just one G.C.S.E., Home Economics. This was the Child Development option, the main part of which involved a lengthy child-study of a three- to five-year-old, undertaken over three months. This gave them practice both in scientific observation and in prose-writing for the report.

Stop press: Tim and Abi passed with good grades. Sighs of relief! It *did* seem difficult at times to persevere with the same skill and it was hard to get into the habit of studying with a specific goal. Sometimes we wondered whether they took the whole thing seriously enough, for they displayed little of the anxiety that their schooled peers tend to. But they got through in their own way, and hope to do some more next year.



We would love to hear from others who have attempted G.C.S.E. at home.

[Lots of us are interested - Ed.]

**Sue and David Lyon**  
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**Bradford,**  
**West Yorkshire BD2 4NS**

*"Thank God, I was never sent to school  
To be flog'd into following the style of a fool."*  
William Blake

I have never been a great joiner of organizations due to the fact that joining up necessarily involves one in the acceptance of a package deal, parts of which might not feel right. One cannot agree to accept only those parts of the organization's world view with which one is in agreement; organizations evolve well-worn methods of co-opting or ejecting dissenters. Perhaps the major reason that many E.O. families reject school is that involvement in the system necessitates surrender of individual choice and implicit acceptance of a complete social, political and moral world view with which we, and our children, may feel uneasy. Organizations self-perpetuate through the principle that to belong is easier than to play lone wolf; the ocean is mightier than the drop. The pay-offs for acceptance are generous: membership of the herd with full perks, release from isolation, uncertainty and insecurity, and a blueprint for how to deal with each of life's eventualities. Thinking is regulated and made easy; we know where we stand. Of course we lose certain qualities in the process - creativity, spontaneity, and so on - however, the organization works overtime to convince us that these qualities are nebulous, empirically unmeasurable, and hence worthless in

the "real" world. Even the most well-meaning organizations tend to channel members' ideas into well-worn acceptable patterns.

My family joined E.O. (recently) as it appears to be an easy-going, loose-knit organization which is non-directive in its outlook. However talking to E.O.ers and glancing over back issues of the mag. one does begin (surprisingly) to distinguish the fairly widespread expression of a rather relentless chain of logic which seems to appeal particularly to those E.O.ers who are fond of labelling themselves "alternative"; it runs something like this:

1. I am anti-societal-values, therefore
2. I am anti-school, therefore
3. I am anti-school-methods, therefore
4. I am anti-teaching-techniques.

In extreme cases the line of argument is extended to include

5. I am anti education in any form.

Now the danger in such a blueprint, it seems to me, is that it covers too wide an area and leads to attitudes and actions which can stunt growth in both parents and kids. The logic looks attractive; after all, points 1 - 3 express the *raison d'être* of E.O. However, to extend the argument to point 4 (as many families do) and to reject or disregard the wealth of

teaching resources and techniques which educationalists (both mainstream and 'alternative' have evolved over centuries, seems to me both arrogant and naïve. Certainly I am aware of the past failings of educational *methods* - they do encourage competitiveness, discourage spontaneity, are teacher led, and so on. However, unless we are at least aware of some of the vast range of educational techniques which have been developed, we will find ourselves (as many E.O.ers appear to do) constantly reinventing the wheel.

Methods are value laden, techniques are simply tools. In fact if we work with our kids in any way, we do, of necessity, adopt educational techniques; the question is whether these techniques work for us or whether we continue to use them because we are simply ignorant of other ways of doing things. Our range is limited by self-imposed ignorance. We may justify this ignorance by claiming that we like our teaching to be informal, flowing. Fair enough; but here we are objecting to method, technique is value-free. The Jazz musician John Coltrane said his motto was "still learning". The jazz musician, like E.O.ers, is suspicious of methods; he prefers to improvise, to feel his way into the music, to establish a flow, a two-way communication process. Nevertheless, he learns from exposure

to other artists, other ways of playing; he might incorporate elements of rock, reggae, classical, and so on, into his style. The style remains uniquely his but augmented by communication and exposure. The good improviser constantly adds to his technique, hones his tools, expands his musical palate. Similarly, E.O.ers could benefit from more exposure to a range of teaching techniques. Our tendency to reject education as a blanket phenomenon possibly stems from some of our own negative experiences of the school system. To reject the whole painful set-up seems easier and more clear-cut than to sift through it and extract the jewels in the dung heap. However it is worth the effort. To apply ourselves to learning a range of teaching techniques is not that daunting - after all, school teachers manage it and we are fond of pointing out that their I.Q.s rarely exceed two figures. E.O. should not be a poor alternative to school; it should be better. We need to improvise using all the skills at our disposal - energy, love, intuition and a range of sound techniques. Good intentions are not enough. As E.O.ers we are teachers; as teachers we have a responsibility to keep learning. The challenge is to do better.

**Jamie Ferguson**  
**45 Burnbank Road,**  
**Hamilton,**  
**Scotland**

## Things to say to advisors and teachers

I have a limited but fairly exciting experience of talking to officialdom. It leads me to think that it might be useful to collect together some pertinent statements about education and some searching questions which could be used to alter the perspective of a conversation with a visiting advisor or a school official.

I am not suggesting that we should try to offend 'the great and good'; nonetheless, they have no right to expect a clear run just because they went to college and got letters after their names. I have tried saying some of these things myself, and noticed a distinct odour of rarely used mental machinery filling the air!

### Statements

"Yes, but on the other hand...":

- ◆ Education is thoroughly satisfied curiosity. No curiosity, no education.
- ◆ Teaching is (essentially) answering questions the children have not asked.
- ◆ Education is not the National Curriculum, or the teacher's lesson notes; it is what my kid takes home at the end of the day. If the lesson was about the Binomial Theorem and my kid spent it in despair because he did not understand the maths, and anyway, he wanted to go to the loo but dared not ask, that lesson was nothing else but pain and confusion. I don't pay my Poll Tax for pain and confusion.
- ◆ You judge schooling by the 'opportunities' it gives children. Perhaps you should sometimes look at the things that a child *loses* the chance to do because he has to go to school.
- ◆ If schooling is compulsory it has *no right* to fail.
- ◆ The National Curriculum is a bit like one medicine for all diseases, is it not?
- ◆ People do not learn the way teachers teach. They move through the material in fits and starts, doubling back, lingering over some parts, skipping others, stopping when they lose interest, going back over earlier work when they realize they have forgotten it. This would look unprofessional in a teacher's lesson-notes, so teachers drag all their pupils through the same course at the same speed so they can set the same exam and pretend that all the pupils have reached the same level.
- ◆ Everything we do to a child we also do to a grown man or woman. Therefore we ought to look at our methods to see if they are liable to mark children in some deep, indelible way. Perhaps we need to examine more closely the long-term effects of schooling on adults as they move through the later phases

of their lives.

- ◆ 'Breadth' and 'variety' are entirely adult notions. I will bet Wardour Street to a china orange most people never get to know whether their schooling was broad and varied. They only remember whether they liked it or not.
- ◆ My child learned to speak English without books, teachers or lessons. He mastered grammar, intonation and vocabulary using only the mental resources he was issued with when he was born. I reckon he can manage a good number of other intellectual feats without a great deal of pushing and guiding.
- ◆ But the *child* is the customer. Education has to work for *him*, not for me.

### Questions

- ◆ What, apart from the loos and the lunches, happens in this school because a child expresses a need for it?
- ◆ You say my child has 'done wrong', and that you are going to punish him for it. What steps have you taken to find out why he did it, and to convince him that he should not do it again?
- ◆ How, exactly, does being made to do things - even good, worthwhile things - engender in a child the desire to do them for himself?
- ◆ How can a child learn to be responsible unless we allow him to choose between behaviours which are sensible or irresponsible, and then require him to live by the natural consequences of his choice?
- ◆ You have expressed regret that my work with my child has not included some procedure which you would expect him to experience at school. Surely there are uncoun- table millions of possible activities which we could do. All education involves choosing one course of action and abandoning an infinity of others. Why do you not appreciate what we have actually done?
- ◆ When you look at the enormous swings which have taken place in educational thinking in recent years, do you not sometimes wonder if the value of a person's opinion on education is related to the salary he gets for giving it and not to any absolute weight which it might have?
- ◆ You tell me that you want my work with my children to be 'structured', 'systematic' and so on. My child learns and remembers what he studies in his 'unstructured', 'unsystematic' way. Many children in your structured school forget most of their lessons. What, exactly, is the advantage of your way over mine?
- ◆ What is your definition of education?
- ◆ How can I justify teaching my child subjects he is not interested in?
- ◆ My child has my undivided atten-

tion for several hours every day. How much personal attention would he get if he were in school?

Try some of these out on your advisors and school officials. My experience is that almost everyone in education uses the same essential structure of thought. It is a way of talking about children and their lives which sounds professional but is in fact simplistic.

You may be astonished by the effect of asking one of these questions. It could be temporary paralysis of the lower jaw, or a look of bewilderment mingled with terror. The point is not that radical thinking is always better than traditional: it is simply that, with all due respect to them, most education professionals don't think - not about real children anyway - from one year's end to the next.

**Christopher R. Shute**  
7 Kiln Way,  
Polesworth,  
Staffs



#### HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION

South Pembrokeshire. Large house. Sleeps 9 - 12; self-catering. Reduced rates out of season for E.O. families.

Details: Jacky Barlow  
Telephone: 0763 838941

## Pen-pals

**Rosie Raymond** would like a pen-pal of around her own age (10). She loves everything to do with horses and ponies, has lots of particoloured mice and she breeds them.

Four Seasons, Coneyhurst, Billinghurst, W. Sussex RH14 9DG

**Catherine Reeds**, who goes to school, is looking for a pen-pal of about her age (12). Her hobbies are riding, writing stories and poems, and listening to Technotronic, Janet Jackson, etc. She owns lots of animals.

Mount Cottage, Scotland Lane, Ingoldsby, Grantham, Lincs. NG33 4ES

**Cassie Stephenson**, 12, would like pen-pals of any age. She is new to E.O. and has only been home educated for four months. She likes fell-walking, reading, model-making, woodwork, cycling, and poetry. She has two cats. She also has a sister, Katie, who is 8.

55 Taylor Ave., Bearpark,  
Durham DH7 7AX

Hello, my name is **Kerry Cummings** and I am 13 years old. I have just joined Education Otherwise and I would like a penpal aged twelve to fourteen (boy or girl). My hobbies are showing dogs, writing letters and going swimming. My address is 1 Highland Terrace, Ferryhill, Co. Durham DL17 8AD

# Socialization and home education

I have been reading the articles about socialization and home education with much interest. I myself have three children at home, two who have attended school. I found that while they were at school, the children did appear to have lots of friends, but the friendships were very transient, and now they have fallen by the wayside altogether, although we did try to keep in touch.

I do find that with them being at home they get lonely and they have to make a real effort to have friends, as there is not the day to day contact of school. *But*, I find now, that the friends they do have are very special to them. The socializing that they do now is different too: it is much friendlier, they are more interested in people as people, and not the "I've got a so-and-so" mentality of school contact.

I have found that since they left school they are much more in touch with their feelings, as before they seemed to be bombarded with emotional experiences of all kinds and coped by cutting themselves off to a certain degree. While my son was at school, he did not socialize, he just fought a lot; since he left school, he has learnt, and I'd also say *felt able*, to talk and co-operate more with other children.

I feel that, yes, children do miss out on the socialization they would have at school, but that 'missing out' is a very positive thing. I know my children would not wish to return to it. I know for a fact that keeping my children away from school has made them better able to handle the rough and tumble of life, because they have time to recuperate. While they were at school they became overloaded; they did cope in their own ways but to the detriment of part of themselves. They had to hide their softer kinder sides to keep 'in' with the other children.

My youngest daughter has never been to school and I find that she is the most capable and resilient of all my three children. When she has been wronged, she is much more confident and determined to see justice than is my thirteen year old, and she is only five.

All I know is I feel very sad that my other two children had to go through all those years of schooling before I became aware that there was another option open to us.

**Mrs K. Paxton**  
**34 Rosehill Park West,**  
**Sutton,**  
**Surrey**  
**SM1 3LB**  
**Telephone 081 641 1312**



## *School's Out* - four years on

Let me thank again those of you who have written to me over the past few years about *School's Out*. I felt that writing the book was a great privilege, a rare opportunity to put together ideas and arguments - and it is not every day a home-educating parent gets the space to do that.

I did expect, when the book was first published, to be bombarded by hostile letters from indignant theorists - no, I do not mean E.O. theorists, but irate teachers and 'experts'. Instead I have received many warm-hearted and wonderful letters from people outside as well as inside E.O. I am greatly cheered - and humbled - to get a glimpse of the care and love with which such a number of parents approach the upbringing of their children.

Some of you have expressed interest about our life after *School's Out*, what has happened to us since. When I wrote the book, Victor and I had two daughters, Hosanna and Fiorin. I was very much the home-based mother, entirely removed from the necessity of making a living, with virtually all my time directed to the rearing of the children - well, until I started writing the book, that is. We lived in pretty straitened circumstances (euphemism

for poverty!) but I thought of my role as mother in terms of "I give you my time more precious than money" (apologies to Walt Whitman).

Shortly after I finished writing the book I gave birth to Taliesin, a son. We now have three children, each at a very different stage of development - there is an eleven year span between eldest and youngest - which has had its own effect on our approach to home education.

We found three children a considerable change from two - much more clamour for airtime and far too little space now in our cramped house. Victor and I considered carpeting the walls to cut down some of the noise! The Cobbetts of this world have my unending admiration: he educated his seven children at home and claimed "Many a score of paper I have written amidst the noise of children, and in my whole life I never bade them be still." (I suspect he had a bigger house than we have!)

The most radical change in our household came about a year or two ago in response to a complete reappraisal of our family economy, our health and our employment prospects. We decided to tackle our deepening problems with... (I feel a few dots are needed

here) a complete role reversal. Victor took over as Mother and I took over the main responsibility for financial support of the family.

So, Victor and I now share the job of educating the children, with most of the day-to-day care of the younger two coming from him. We have perhaps shifted further away from the active educator (or teacher) approach towards the more relaxed "let them learn as they grow" philosophy. Victor observed recently that what you teach children is less important than how you treat them.

Between us we cobble together an uncertain living out of various low-paid occupations as student, medical research assistant, writer, caretaker of local community hall. I am doing a B.Sc. in psychology at university while Victor gallantly cooks, keeps a weather eye on the washing and juggles with questions on Hero's Formula, the Inquisition, and the Three Bears all at the same time.

How have we fared? Taliesin, aged three, thinks Daddy Bear making the porridge is the normal way of life. We have not followed the Early Learning route with him and he seems just fine on it.

Fiorin is now eight and, in spite of

what the Contact List may say to the contrary, has never been to school. She still laments, as I wrote in *School's Out*, that we do not give her enough schoolwork (so it must be true). She asks to be started on Latin and other 'real' subjects as soon as possible.

Hosanna, at fourteen, has largely been self-taught over the past few years. For the first time now in recent weeks she has started to express positive thoughts about going to school and it may be that that will be the solution to the question of what she does about G.C.S.E.s. Correspondence courses are another possibility but seem in some ways a lonely (as well as expensive) variety of schooling.

I, while thoroughly enjoying university life, mourn the passing of my less hurried years at home. The sundry part-time jobs that we now do to make ends - not quite - meet make Victor's work as house-spouse busier than ever. We both often feel, to misquote Wordsworth a little, "Getting and spending we lay waste our days".

Towards the end of the book I mused over the desirability of throwing out the telly. Well, we have not actually chucked it out but we have removed it to the back of a deep cupboard - one of the best things we ever did. Apart from the occasional token (and jokey) moan

that they never found out what happened in Neighbours, the children barely seem to notice its absence. When Hosanna was given money on her birthday to buy her own television for her bedroom, she decided she would keep the money for better things. We parents, on very rare occasions, cheat and get out the set for a late night film but it only makes us realize how little we are missing.

Would we do it all again? A quick canvas of the family reveals the decision is Yes to learning at home (although Fiorin puts in the proviso that she would like to go to school when she is eleven) but Not Necessarily Yes to writing a book about it!

Hmm, a pause while everyone tells me why you should not write about your own family - it makes them feel other

people have false expectations of them ("I sound like such a revolting little goody-goody!") and it certainly makes us adults all too aware of our very real failings. But, for all that, I hope *School's Out* served a purpose in showing that home education is possible in far from perfect circumstances and I am pleased that so many of you enjoyed reading it.

Jean Bendell

[For those who have not read it, *School's Out* is a wonderful, joyful, inspiring book about how and why the Bendells decided to home-educate their children. Essential reading for anyone considering the same path, in my opinion. Available through E.O. - see "Where to get what" on page 44 of this newsletter for ordering details. - Ed.]

Advice on spelling, punctuation, and so on, taken from *Oxford English: a guide to the language*, compiled by I. C. B. Dear; Oxford University Press. Also used: the 1990 edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*; *Bloomsbury Good Word Guide*.

# ARCHIE

## CHRISTMAS CARDS

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# Experiences Of Home Education

## A LEARNING PROCESS

I have chosen now to write about our own experiences of home education, as we are looking forward to our second year of having the boys (Andrew, 7, and Chris, 5½) at home; it can't have been too awful - they have chosen to stay home educated - though Chris, who has not been to school, would like to try school dinners - the reputation, if not the quality, must have changed since I was younger!



We had known about E.O. for years, even before the children were born, but I did not know how to get in touch, who to ask, and so on. Then, two years ago, I came across an E.O. stall at the Leamington Peace Festival, grabbed a handful of leaflets, *Early Years, School Is Not Compulsory*, and *Later Years*, and started reading.

We spent almost a year trying to decide what to do but, in the end, it was a combination of 'doing our own thing' and Andrew's continued lack of settling in that did it.

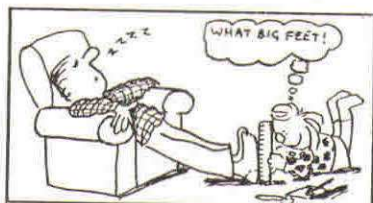
Although the local school was happy, busy, fairly multicultural and not too big, I did not feel entirely that it was the best place for him to be, and I did not much like the reports I had had of the local middle schools, so last July, hair combed and tidily dressed, we told Andrew's head-teacher of our plans, and wrote to the L.E.A. The head-teacher was happy for us to have a go, and said that we could always ask for help if we needed to. The L.E.A. sent us a neutral letter which meant that we could go ahead.

We had been teaching the boys part-time at home in the holidays for the few months before cutting loose, and felt reasonably happy with it, so the boys' school-life came to an end - with them both in bed with chickenpox and a nasty dose of nits as a souvenir.



Since then, we have been very up and down, experimenting with timetables, project work, and the 'do nothing' philosophy, scouring shops for work-books. We suddenly realized

that our major expense was going to be felt pens: we get through about ten assorted colours per month, we keep losing tops, and the ink does not wash out of clothes with Ecover alone.



The boys were given a computer for Christmas (a mixed blessing - we had to dash out to buy a television two days before Christmas), and we tried to watch the schools' programmes, but the times often interfered with other things the boys were doing.

It has taken a year for us to learn to let go, to learn that we do not need to follow a school-type day, that we do not need to make the boys do reading, writing and arithmetic every day, that they do it pretty well by themselves, when it is relevant to whatever they happen to be doing at the time. I have stopped worrying about whether they *should* be at any particular academic level. Instead, we are trying to put fun



first, and to let them grow as individuals. We do have yucky days too, when squabbling knocks the whole day out of kilter, when I want to go shopping but they want to watch 'Droids', when I wonder whether it is a good idea to let children have a say in everything, meaning that we have to argue the case for things we want done.



We do feel more confident about what we are doing now. We even ran a 'Home Education' stall at a rural living show in May, watching other people's reactions to the idea: some were patronizing and some defensive; some grabbed leaflets and ran away, as I myself had done two years ago, whilst others stopped for a long chat.



Next time I shall arm myself with E.O. books to sell.

We do enjoy reading the newsletter; it is lovely to read things from other families and to keep up to date with legal developments. Sometime, we will even get round to contacting people with similar ideas, or to reading the books they recommend.

**Mario and Sue McNamara**  
12 Clapham Street,  
Leamington Spa,  
Warwickshire CV31 1JJ  
Telephone (0926) 338199

## FRIENDS WANTED

Dear E.O.,

We are a family of four, living in Buckinghamshire: Roger and Francesca, Jenni, 15, and Charley, 11. Jenni is very bright and attends a local grammar school (her choice) and has no wish for home education, but a family decision was made to educate Charley 'otherwise', when the situation at school became desperate.

As a baby and pre-school child he was always happy and appeared to learn quickly, although he was very slow to talk. Even then, he responded best in a quiet, calm atmosphere. Obviously, when he started school at five, he was very keen at first, but gradually, as time went on, he became very withdrawn socially and academically regressed at an alarming rate.

We felt that something was wrong and

requested an examination, but the school officials were reluctant to comply. The educational psychologist refused to come to our home and, having seen Charley at school, suggested that his problem was emotional and asked whether there were "difficulties at home". She said that she could find nothing wrong academically even though, at that time, Charley was seven yet could not write legibly at all, or do simple first year maths.

After many battles, tears, and torment, I heard the magical phrase 'Education Otherwise' through a friend, Carol, who was teaching her two girls at home. We took our chance and deregistered Charley, with not a word from the staff or headmistress of the school. Relief on their part?

It took a long time for him to realize that he was not an idiot and could do many things. We managed to get an appointment, through our doctor, at St. Thomas's learning difficulties clinic, and it was here that they diagnosed severe audio-visual memory damage, probably from birth. This meant that Charley does not retain knowledge naturally for any length of time, as most people do, so we knew that we would have to find a way to make the lessons we do 'stick'. As Charley has an above average I.Q. and a terrific personality,

the paediatrician was extremely interested in this "unusual case" and wished us luck.

Four years later we are basking in our success, 'our' being the key to the problem. I do most of the preparation and teaching myself but would never have managed without a very important person, our friend Silvia, who teaches Charley maths to a very high standard and becomes a confidant for Charley when I can't take any more, which does occur, believe me.

I would not have kept going without the continuing encouragement of my husband Roger, who has sustained us with his love and support, and Jenni, who helps with the preparation and advice as well as doing her own studies. I am also lucky in having support from the rest of our relatives. The L.E.A. people pay regular visits and are very helpful now, although I felt very alone for the first year.

Any regrets? Only one: Charley is a very gregarious and sociable person and, although he has retained the friendship of one or two local boys and is very popular with everyone, for him this is not enough now. He would like lots of friends, especially of his own age but, in spite of having contacted lots of people on the contact list, we have had no luck. All of the children we have come to know

are either too young or are now back in school.

Would we do it again? Yes, definitely. We still feel terribly angry about the school officials' failure to recognize the problem, and about their having ignored us to the point of almost destroying our child completely. This should never happen.

**Francesca Carvill**  
20 Glebe Road,  
Chalfont St. Peter,  
Bucks  
Telephone (0753) 888205

## **NORMAL EDUCATION: THE RIGHT DECISION**

Dear fellow E.O.ers,  
I thought you would like to have an update on how Emmalyne and I have fared after our letter in the June issue. We had actually written that in January, as we were about to take the plunge.

We have had some super letters of support which have *really* helped a lot. I needed that; thank you.

Emmalyne is still embarrassed when others question her, but the difference in her is amazing. My happy, confident little daughter is smiling again, and life is *good*. She spends large parts of the day with horses, and

'schoolwork' is done whenever she wants to bother. I have been woken up at midnight on one occasion.



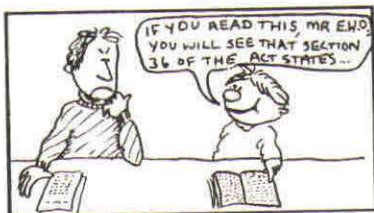
We have done so much that is fun (bliss!). She created her first garden and the flowers are gorgeous. We now have chicks from her pet bantams and Emmalyne recently acquired a baby panther (well, a kitten that thinks it's one anyway) to add to the menagerie. We particularly enjoy going out walking, sightseeing, and to the beach when everyone else is at school. Academically Emmalyne is



ploughing ahead at a pace which is hers, not average or anyone else's. Just how it should be, I think.

We had a visit from the Education Welfare Officer - on our first day and unannounced. However, he was fine and seemed happy when he left. I was

grateful that I knew my 'ins and outs', though, as he did not know them as clearly. Perhaps he ought to read my E.O. books and 'educate' himself in that field?



Self doubt does hit me from time to time but I now know that, if possible, I will never return Emmalyne to school. I am glad that we both had the courage to give 'normal education' a try because it is one of the best decisions we have made so far, judging by our limited experience, of course. By 'normal education' I do not mean school either. I mean life in a secure, caring environment with support for each other and respect for each other. Freedom!

By the way, we would love to meet anyone who is down this way on holiday at any time. Members are scarce in North Devon. Best wishes to all, and to anyone who is nervous, as I was, I say try it, you will be glad you did.

**Wendy Downing**  
**Oak Tree Cottage,**  
**Bratton Fleming, North Devon**  
**Telephone (0598) 710774**

## SCHOOL FAILURE TO MEET ACADEMIC NEEDS

Dear E.O.,

We are the Wood family from Leicesters: Gary and Tracy, David (nearly 8), Andrew (nearly 6) and James (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ).

It is nearly a year now since we made the final decision that our eldest son, David, would not return to full-time state schooling after the summer break. Having dithered and debated for the previous eighteen months, this came as a relief.

The decision to withdraw David from school was pushed to a climax by a variety of factors, including the fact that his younger brother, Andrew, was due to start school in September 1989 as a rising five. This would have indicated a final acceptance of an education system which we already had doubts about.

When David had started school two years previously, he had been full of eager anticipation for "proper school work"; he soon became disappointed and increasingly bored. After half a term we discovered that the teacher was totally unaware that David was already a fluent self-taught reader, and a fairly good independent writer. The situation was temporarily relieved by the intervention of the headmaster, who allowed David access to the

junior library.

In our naïvety, with the headmaster's support, we requested a full assessment by an educational psychologist, in the belief that an assessment of special needs arising from above-average academic abilities would allow a claim for financial help (in the form of an extra teaching allowance) to benefit the school as a whole. However, the school was informed that there was no point in pursuing this further, because the 1981 Act only provides for special needs arising from under-achievement. Whatever happened to education according to aptitudes and abilities? It seems that in our state schools the academically bright are expected to survive *despite* the system. How sad.

The main problems still remained. David was returning home bad tempered and irritable, frantically cramming as much writing and reading into the evenings as he could, when we felt that he should be relaxing and playing. The school was obviously not meeting his academic needs, causing him great frustration. In a class of at least thirty young children it is probably not *possible* to meet individual needs, or to enable children to develop at a pace which is normal for them, be it slower or quicker than some hypothetical 'average'. The necessity must presumably be to aim

for an overall minimum standard. We have great sympathy for the many good teachers who operate within this system, under an increasing administrative burden, which detracts from their real role.

Thus we began our first year of home-schooling. My main doubts were concerned with my ability to cope with the demands of three small boys and remain sane. We were in a suburban semi-detached routine (we



still are!) with my husband working very long hours (he still is), with no other E.O.ers nearby, so we decided to give it a go for twelve months, then review the situation. A lot of readjusting and compromising of reality with ideals followed.

Overall, it is clear that despite any negative aspects to home-schooling, the positive ones do hold the balance for us. We would consider these to be primarily the happiness of our children, and also the retrieval of responsibility for their education. Our consciences are a lot easier.

With regard to the authorities, our advisor was due to call in October 1989, but cancelled because of 'flu. Since then, all has been quiet. An enquiry by the headmaster to the L.E.A. brought the response "We're busy at the moment" and "We've more important things to do". In the meantime David remains officially registered, but absent with the headmaster's approval. He actually attends one afternoon a week to join the class swimming trips, which he enjoys very much.

At home we have achieved a comfortable balance between his academic needs (easily satisfied by working at his own level) and other pursuits; he can actually allow himself time to play.

As far as the future is concerned, we are happy to let things develop, and keep an open mind on possible future schooling, if it seems appropriate. We have satisfied ourselves, however, that the important function of education (whatever one's personal definition of this might be) can be met within the home, and certainly otherwise than by attendance at school.

**Tracey and Gary Wood**  
 10 Bilberry Close,  
 Narborough Rd. South,  
 Leicester LE3 2JA  
 Telephone (0533) 897571

## A FATHER'S VIEWPOINT

First let me set the scene: we have four children, three boys and a girl, ages nine, seven, four and one; the two eldest have never been to school. We live in a fairly large house in a village, and I go off to work Monday to Friday to earn our keep. There are some other E.O. families around which we might see once a week, but essentially we are on our own.

Usually the days begin late, as none of the children go to bed before 10 p.m., so I have my breakfast and slip off unnoticed. The days are largely unstructured but invariably busy; 'education' just happens through life rather than anything formal. Things have been like this for some time now, for several reasons: one is that we have had no contact with the L.E.A. in the five years we have been home educating, and secondly, with two little ones to cope with, it is incredibly hard for Val to do anything for the two eldest during the day. Anything that does happen is usually condensed into the hour or so that Rosie, the youngest, spends asleep. The house is 'littered' with resources of all shapes and sizes so the children can fend for themselves if need be, though currently their interest in formal education is fairly spasmodic.

The children become less self-suffi-

cient when I come home from work, and I am bombarded with requests even before I am out of the car. I sometimes have to remember that Val is in the house waiting to see me as well (with her list). The evenings and weekends often consist of activities that she is either unable to do during the day or is less interested in than me. Being sporty, these activities invariably include football, tennis, golf, snooker, running, woodwork, and so on. We usually finish up with a story or two at bedtime. We try to spend time together as a family, but, being so large, functioning as a unit is not easy. Shopping trips are a disaster; visiting people unless they are of like size to us feels like an invasion, and eating out can be less fun than paying the poll tax.

We often discuss the two very different roles Val and I have and, although my job is very stressful and demanding, there is no doubt that her role is twice as hard as mine. It is no wonder that she and the children pounce on me when I come home; one person can only give so much for so long before they become exhausted. So, for all you fathers out there in a similar position to me, think hard about your partner's role, and do whatever you can to make it easier and more enjoyable for them.

**James Gorman**

**Castletorpe, Milton Keynes**

Caring for Life International - 'Home Educating' Special Needs  
Children in Romania

Please read this item together with the item in the main newsletter.

The children who are very ill or severely handicapped will be educated as well as simply cared for, at their family group home. So, if you have any special needs toys or equipment your children have outgrown, please consider donating them to CFLI (see address etc. in the main article). Any and all toys, etc., will be such a help.

Please note also that Crag House Farm is a super place to visit with special needs children. They can touch the animals, and there is wheelchair access and TOILETS. If you are in the area, do phone and book a visit and deliver gifts at the same time!

Kim Wark, Leeds.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Sylvia,

The last article in the April special needs supplement compelled me to put pen to paper - the thought of parents spending as much as £75 on tests *which are available on the NHS* appals me.

My son, Alex, has mild cerebral palsy; it affects his ability to use his right hand and his automatic responses on that side of his body. His condition was diagnosed when he was eleven weeks old, and from then he has been monitored by the same consultant.

After various school experiences, some good, some bad, I took Alex out of school and started home education in Jan 1985, just before he was 10.

I had noticed that he had been bringing home school library books and taking them back before he could possibly have finished them. His teacher noticed too, and asked if he did in fact read them... I knew he couldn't have read them from cover to cover. He was becoming emotionally disturbed by his school experiences anyway.

We read every day when I started to teach him, and I noticed that he would often miss a line... I would just point to where he should be reading and he would carry on. I mentioned this to the LEA representative who came to monitor my efforts every term; she assured me that it was quite a common thing and would sort itself out.

I had never noticed this problem when he was learning to read, although of course, the print was much larger in those first books. When we visited the library I noticed he always chose the larger print books.

When I removed Alex from school, I told the consultant that he had had several unexplained falls. Tests were done and akinetic fits were diagnosed - though he was not put on medication, as I hoped that de-schooling him might relieve the obvious emotional pressures on him.

Alex had had an eye test at his nursery school and all was said to be correct. His first school said he had difficulty in seeing the blackboard, so I took him to my optician, who again said nothing was

wrong. We then went every six months to see that nothing had altered.

After a term or two of home education, Alex himself noticed that he often missed a line or two - he would finish a line then start at the beginning of the second or third line down, or even at the beginning of the line he had just finished. Back to the optician! I explained that Alex often missed lines in reading. The usual tests were carried out. "Nothing wrong with his eyes, he must be bored with what he's reading" said the optician! Since we never read material which was not of interest to him, I dismissed this diagnosis and sought the help of my consultant to get Alex's vision tested through the hospital service.

The consultant agreed to refer Alex to the Eye Dept. on condition that my own optician retested him and found no need for him to wear spectacles. My optician said Alex had a short-sight problem that was so miniscule that he would not prescribe spectacles, so eventually I got an appointment.

Again Alex was given the usual optician's tests, then the orthoptist tested his peripheral vision and his convergence vision!!

This was his problem: when an object came very near to him, instead of both his pupils travelling in towards his nose, his left pupil travelled out towards his temple. It was all in his muscle... Three month's exercises which were very simple, and which I did with him a couple of times a day, and his problem was corrected.

The orthoptist said this problem would not have been picked up by the normal optician's tests, and I am sure a class teacher hearing a child read for a few minutes a week would never have detected it either.

What is very disconcerting is that I read in a book written by Dr. Beve Hornsby, called "Overcoming Dyslexia" that people who suffer from cerebral palsy often have this convergence problem, yet Alex was never tested for it until I raised the matter.

Alex's writing did improve considerably for a while, but is not so good just now. He had to take up medication for his epilepsy - he had a couple of grand mal attacks and we had to increase it last September, he has grown so much; but he seemed able to grasp number work better after the increase in Epikim.

A more recent test showed he was getting a lot of interference of an epileptic nature which could affect his learning, so reluctantly, I agreed to increase his medication... maybe his writing will improve again - who knows! He has also had spectacles for the past 16 months - eye sight changes when growing, especially at this stage of development. But he certainly never misses lines when reading now, and he always has his nose in a book!

My message really boils down to the fact that all these tests are available through the NHS - it is up to you to push for them. After all, it is your child's right.

Incidentally, the Susan Hampshire book referred to in the supplement must be a follow-up to "Susan's Story" by the same author, published by Shere Books Ltd. I found this book very enlightening.

Barbara Millet. (Essex)

NOTICE: I believe Jeffrey Benge has written to the main newsletter concerning a special needs contact list. Please support him so that we can provide better contacts and more help to new members and to each other.

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I was keen to write something about my recent visit to IBM Computers, who have a policy of helping disabled or handicapped users. Unfortunately, space and time are both limited this time, but I will write at a future date. Meanwhile here's some news of a related kind:

### CHATBACK THE WORLD OVER

Communicating with others is the most human of all activities. Only humans are capable of weaving a web of thoughts into a strand of words and delivering them to others.

The frustration and loneliness suffered by children with speech problems is being partly relieved by an electronic mail system called 'Chatback'. This enables children with little or no speech to exchange messages with pen-pals all over the world.

Chatback started in 1987 and was the brainchild of EO member Tom Holloway, at that time on secondment from IBM's support centre at Warwick for people with disabilities. Tom was deeply moved by a television programme screened a few years ago about a man called Joey with a speech dysfunction. "Because Joey's speech was poor, nobody took the trouble to find out he had average intelligence," said Tom. "This made me realise that it is possible to have language, but not speech, and this sparked my interest."

Tom, with a couple of IBM colleagues and friends from the Polytechnic of Central London's Computer Centre for the Disabled, persuaded IBM, British Telecom and British Gas that the idea had merit, and The Chatback Project was born.

### WHO IS CHATBACK FOR?

Any child in the United Kingdom with a speech and/or communications difficulties can apply. Many of the children currently being helped have Athetoid Cerebral Palsy; others are profoundly deaf. The common factor is that such children will normally use a personal computer to assist them to communicate. Application is normally made through a school or Education Authority but parents or caring organisations may also apply and Education Otherwise members will be very welcome (although there is a queue).

### WHAT DO YOU NEED AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

You will need a personal computer, either a BBC or an IBM compatible. Each child accepted is given the means to send and receive information via Prestel and an electronic mail service called Telecom Gold. A modem is provided with appropriate communications software, (BBC or IBM) and training for parents or teachers given if needed.

The children call up a special noticeboard on Prestel for information from organisations concerned with the handicapped, hints on using computers and lists of children with whom they can communicate. They can also contribute themselves by writing book and television reviews.

"This is the gateway to independence," said Tom. "People with disabilities want to be independent and technology not only provides them with a means to communicate, but can also give them access to a job. We aren't just replacing their speech difficulty with a computer alternative - we are giving them a skill for life. Many children now have contacts with children abroad. I don't think that the children in Australia and Canada and the USA are aware that some of the kids they communicate with in the UK have a disability."

If you already have access to Telecom Gold (sometimes called TTNS or CAMPUS) and you would like to write to any of the Chatback children, you should get in touch with Tom at mailbox number 01:CLK001. If you would like advice about using such a system for Education Otherwise you can reach him on 0926-420204.

If you know of a child who would find Chatback useful, please get in touch with the Chatback Manager, Charlotte Oliver, at the Poly of Central London, 071-323-0017.

\*  
The use of email in education hinges on a simple fact: the speed of transfer between users means that it can be thought of as a method for a 'slow cheap telephone-call' rather than a 'fast cheap letter-delivery'. Here are some examples:-

- \* A High-school class in rural Virginia writing projects on the historical development of their State correspond directly with a similar group in Plymouth (where many Virginians originated).
- \* This October young people in England, France, Holland, USA, Canada, Australia and Germany will be exchanging the wartime experiences of their Grandparents with each other (REMEMBERING WEEK).
- \* Students researching medicinal plants in the Amazon Jungle have been describing their daily experiences and answering questions from children in the USA, UK, Germany, almost anywhere. (ORINOCO Project).
- \* Plans are afoot to exchange messages with schools in Moscow and Kiev, and we have been asked if we can help set up similar links to black and multi-racial schools in South Africa

\* electronic mail

Additional information from Sylvia:

I understand that each user needs access to a telephone line for at least 15 minutes a day, for uploading and downloading. Some assistance with telephone charges may be available - you would need to talk to the Chatback Manager about this.

Users need not be entirely without speech (but will probably have a speech dysfunction); however, language structures should be intact as far as possible, and a reading age of at least 11 years will be required.

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Please note that the next Special needs supplement will be in the April 1991 magazine. Don't wait for the 'deadline' (1st. March) to send your contributions - do it now!

Sylvia Jeffs 16, St. Bernards Rd., Solihull, West Mids. B92 7B  
Tel: 021 706 6460

# L.E.A. advisors

Son, Ben is 8½ and has never been to school.

Dear E.O.,

I am writing in response to Charlotte Keith's letter about visits from the L.E.A. advisor (June 1990, no. 74).

A year before the birth of our son we decided that we would like to home educate. We felt that it would suit us and that we could do at least as good a job as our local (highly regarded, old fashioned, academic) primary school. Our own personal experiences of school could be graded fair to appalling, and the state of education nationally and locally offered us no encouragement that things had improved at all.

Initially, I wrote to the L.E.A. expressing an interest in home education and enquiring whether any specific qualifications were required. When I received no reply I rang the local office to be told that 'they' preferred parents undertaking this task to be literate and numerate. I was heartened. I am not a lover of bureaucracy and there is no love lost between the L.E.A. (my former employers) and me, but I wanted to do things properly and avoid confrontation, so when our son was 4½ I wrote again. I duly completed the form they sent, detailing my ideal timetable, and waited for

a knock at the door. In due course a visit was arranged and I spent three exhausting days washing curtains, polishing, scrubbing floors, cleaning the entire house, and panicking.

Not only did the inspector prove charming, erudite, and extremely interested, he also came into only one room. He established a rapport with Ben who soon felt confident enough to read aloud, explain the written work he had completed, and chat on every subject the inspector introduced. After one and a half hours of apparently relaxed conversation and 'examination', Ben and I left for his swimming class while the inspector stayed to chat to my husband about classical music, art, life and everything. We felt reassured.

The system in Essex then changed. No longer did H.M. Inspectors for Schools take responsibility for monitoring home educators but, instead, each Essex area appointed a Primary head-teacher on a year's sabbatical to fulfil this function.

In what would have been Ben's second school year (5½ - 6½) we received two visits from a lady advisor. She too proved interested and sympathetic. She asked us to talk at length about the lessons we had

established, our routine, timetable, social contacts, and so on, and spent some time carefully listening to Ben explain his diary, maths, nature book, stories and poems. She heard him play the piano and read aloud and seemed quite satisfied with all aspects of his work except presentation, which she felt should be more imaginative. She made helpful suggestions about encouraging his reading, improving his maths, and presenting his work. On her second visit she seemed tetchy, perhaps because we had not followed all her suggestions, but she remained kind and sympathetic to Ben, who declared that he liked her.

We liked our third inspector less. He too was concerned that things should be done as they would be in school. He was po-faced and humourless. I got the impression that he felt intimidated. I was glad that our previous experiences had been happier, for after this visit we felt drained, exhausted, and less confident. However, he did suggest a maths book, *Lines of development in primary mathematics*, by Deboys and Pitt, which he felt could help us steer a clearer course through mathematics, and which I have subsequently adopted.

The latest visitor and the longest stayer (four hours each time) has again left us feeling confident. His

thoughts and ideas were exactly in tune with ours. We value and initiate a broad based curriculum, feeling free to go off down new paths if they prove interesting: from nature study to ecology, pollution, climate, monitoring the weather, watching nature in the garden and how it changes with the seasons, for example. I try to teach subjects together rather than in isolation. I teach geography, history, English, and science as one package. The work is kept together in one folder with easy transition between sections, for example.

In conclusion, there are many different views, values and standards in education, and to find an L.E.A. advisor in tune with one's own is satisfying, but beware, the next advisor may harbour opposite views, so educating otherwise continues to be a challenge.

**Deborah Snook**  
**22 Bonchurch Avenue,**  
**Leigh-on-Sea,**  
**Essex**



### **Peckled Pipers Pick Of Story And Music Cassettes**

including cassettes by story-tellers Tim Bowley, Robin Williamson and others, S.A.E. for list to: 39 Fore Street, Hartland, Bideford, Devon EX39 6BE

## You don't have to tell the LEA (but if they ask...)

### **Rumour:**

If you want to educate your child out of school you have to tell the L.E.A.

### **Fact:**

Unless you are withdrawing your child from a school, *this is not true*. (And even if your child is a registered pupil, you do not have to have 'permission' before you start. See note at end.)

If you have a child between the ages of five and sixteen, you have a duty to see that they are properly educated. If your child has never been to school (or has just completed primary education, or if you have just moved to a new area), *this is your only duty*. *You are not obliged to tell the L.E.A. that you are educating 'otherwise'*.

The L.E.A. in turn has a duty to intervene if it thinks you may not be providing proper education. Apart from this it is not required to take any interest in your arrangements. But it is entitled to ask you informally for information if it thinks fit. You do not have to reply to such a request, although it would normally be sensible to do so.

If you come to the attention of your L.E.A., it is in your interest to show that you are educating in a serious, organized way. How you choose to

do this is largely up to you. There are no specific demands the L.E.A. is entitled to make of you. All you have to do is behave reasonably. In other words, if you are asked to do something which you do not wish to do,

- ◆ *don't* do nothing at all;
- ◆ *don't* shrug your shoulders and comply;
- ◆ *do* explain politely but firmly why you are not going to do it;
- ◆ *do*, if at all possible, propose an alternative course of action which suits you better.

### *You do not have to let L.E.A. officers into your home.*

Normally this is the most mutually convenient way of reassuring them that all is well, but if, for any reason, you do not want to let them in, you are perfectly entitled to say no. In any case, you would be wise not to let anyone in without a prior appointment, unless you and your children know and trust them very well.

### *You do not have to provide a timetable, curriculum, or details of qualifications, accommodation, etc.*

You can tell the L.E.A. any of these things if you think it is a good idea, but you are not obliged to. Often the best thing to do may be to disregard any specific requests, but to make a general statement of your philosophy,

You don't have to tell the L.E.A....

aims, methods, and so on, to show them that you are serious and sensible. If you make it sound too alarming, it may get you more attention than you want. On the other hand, make sure what you say is true. If you bend over backwards to look conventional, it may backfire.

*You do not have to allow your child to be tested.*

This could well destroy the relaxed atmosphere you have been striving to create. In any case, an L.E.A. is unlikely to press for formal testing unless it hopes to use the information against you one way or another. Do not let L.E.A. officers see your children on their own.

The L.E.A. is, or should be, interested in the educational well-being of your child. So are you. In most cases a constructive dialogue should be possible. This can take place by letter, telephone, or personal contact, with or without the child, at home or at the L.E.A. offices. The L.E.A. does not have to dictate the ground rules. So long as you are polite, reasonable, and rational, you have a right to communicate on your terms. *And if the L.E.A. has not contacted you at all, whether or not you approach them is entirely up to you.*

**Withdrawing children from school?**  
Write to the head and the L.E.A. with

a brief explanation, and ask for your child's name to be deleted from the admissions register. The L.E.A. must deregister if satisfied that your child is being properly educated. Meanwhile *you are entitled to reasonable time to set your arrangements in motion.*

**Rob Wade, W. London, legal group.**

## HAVE FAITH IN YOURSELF

A response to a letter in the August 1990 newsletter (no. 75) page 32

Dear Lesley James,

It seems to me, from reading your letter, that you are doing fine, and so is Jonathan. I really would not worry him or yourselves about G.C.S.E. and work-shops, and so on. He is obviously not ready yet to take that sort of step: if he was, you would not be wondering how to get him motivated. Seems to me that you and he have achieved wonders in only nine months. I'd suggest more of the same - love and patience in liberal amounts. As with his saxophone lessons, I am sure Jonathan will let you know when he is really ready to branch out, rather than just testing the water.

So keep faith, there really is a very strong light at the end of the tunnel; it may not be quite what you are expecting or hoping for, but, given the space, he will grow up into a happy, fulfilled young man.

**Christine Wallace**

# Letters

## E.O. LIVING ABROAD

Dear E.O. reader,

I am moved to write as I have now reached a stage where I need to be in communication with others who have felt the difficulties of trying to educate their children at home - not only the practicalities, but the philosophical aspects. The problems are compounded for us as we are living abroad and do not have the immediate facilities and support we enjoyed whilst in England.

This is not to say that we wish to bring a little England to France, but simply that the children's mother tongue is English, and we have found, so far, no contact with people considering educating children at home, outside the system. Without going into the bones of the matter, our first priority is answering the question, "What is education?"

Now we are established here, we anticipate in future educating our children bilingually, and seeking out contacts with those who might wish to share in this, whether from France or Britain. However, at the moment, as a trained teacher (PGCE Primary Middle School), I am finding it difficult to adapt myself to teaching my own

children (James, 5 years, Francis, 3, and Lawrence, still a baby) as well as working part time to bring in enough funds.

I believe that it is very important to be part of the community whilst living here, but I am concerned that it is not so easy, as it is so structured. Through helping French children at all levels in the system, I realize the great pressure they are all under and, indeed, how often the system fails them (although they, of course feel that it is the other way round). From what I have heard, Britain's educational system seems to be going the way of the French one - something I find rather worrying.

I would be interested to hear from people who also do not have immediate access to good libraries and contacts with similarly motivated people. How do you keep things generally fresh and progressive? In the future, if anyone would like to consider a short break, or to allow their children a short break, it is something I would like to nurture, but that is for the future.

**Judith Allen**  
**La Quinardais,**  
**St. Samson sur France**  
**Dinan 22100, BRITTANY**

## GLEN DOMAN, and PLANS FOR THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Dear E.O.,

We have found the E.O. newsletter a great encouragement since we joined last year. Our children are aged 3 years and 18 months and it is great to know that there are so many other people out there who do not want their children to go to school. May I use the newsletter to ask a couple of questions someone out there may have an answer to?

We were interested in the article on Glen Doman's methods in the last issue. We tried some of his material with John and found it a bit of a waste of money. The reading material is not really an improvement on "Peter and Jane" plus a thick black marker, some card, and a lot of common sense. We never got anywhere with the maths ideas although we read the book and bought the kit. Is there any other reader who has used this material successfully?

The second question may seem like a bit of a cheek coming from a new member, but here goes. Out of pure curiosity we paid our £6.95, or whatever it was, for a copy of the National Curriculum English. Leaving aside that it stops at about age 8, and that the testing procedures have not yet

been worked out, the thing is written in such a way that it takes masses of time to sort it all out. I am sure that it could all be reduced to a small pamphlet for practical purposes. If the Labour party really do force this ghastly thing on us, could E.O. set up some sort of body or committee to turn it into something digestible? That way we would not all have to waste our time trying to work out what it means.

Thanks again for all the encouragement.

**Chris Eastwood**  
27 Ruthin Road,  
Bwlchgwyn,  
Nr. Wrexham,  
Clwyd LL11 5UT



### ENGLISH CONTACTS SOUGHT

Hello,

I am working with a child (6 years). She does not go to school and we are working in her family. I would like to exchange, to meet, to visit, to correspond with families in the same case or engaged in an alternative or experimental school in England. Can you help me? We can receive groups in our house. Thanks a lot for all.

**Amelie Poulin**  
Ker Lithos  
56 580 Brehan  
France  
Telephone 97 38 87 39

## LABOUR'S PLANS FOR THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The subject of the National Curriculum keeps rearing its head, especially the plans by the Labour Party to extend it to both private schools and home educated children, to safeguard their interests and guarantee an entitlement to a certain standard of education for all children, regardless of background.

Far from getting hot under the collar about it, I would have welcomed an attempt to guide my daughter's home education. It would have made my job easier in some ways: I would not have had to waste mental energy wondering whether we were covering the right topics and working at the right level, and my energies could have been channelled towards making the necessary provision. When Heather was deregistered two and a half years ago for health reasons, I expected that the L.E.A. would supervise us and give me guidelines to follow. We have only ever had one visit, with no communication from them for the last two years. With nobody safeguarding her interests, if I had been a different kind of parent, Heather could have been a housebound, T.V. watching, unemployable 16 year old by now, because nobody in authority cares enough to even ask for a report on how she is doing. I had to make all the arrangements for G.C.S.E. myself - the L.E.A. would have been content to let all that fall by the wayside.

I see the 'Otherwise' part of 'Education Otherwise' as referring to an alternative to school, not as an alternative to education.

Qualifications are like a tool box: when you have one you have the choice whether or not to use it; if you have not got one you have no choice at all. All children deserve the right to get their toolbox and this needs more than a drifting along attitude, simply following the child's interests and whims. It needs will power, proper provision, guidance and a certain amount of persuasion from parents, if they are teaching the children themselves. I hope to see more help or guidance from L.E.A.s one day - who else is there to advise?

Susan Melton  
66 Lamberts Field,  
Bourton on the Water,  
Gloucestershire GL54 2EH  
Telephone (0451) 20176



## LATE READING

A big thank-you to the contributors to the last supplement on late reading. As parent to a reluctant-to-read almost-ten year old, it is comforting to know that there are others of you with the confidence and patience to let your children learn to read when they feel ready to. I do find it hard at times, so I am glad to know that we are not alone.

Lisa and Alfie Hall Davey  
Judgement Cottage,  
Leddington,  
Dymock, Glos. GL18 2DZ



## CONGRATULATIONS

Lisa & Alfie are pleased to announce the birth, on July 1st, of Willowby, a lovely baby brother for Ash, Poppy and Daisy.

## THANKS FOR INFORMATION

Many of you will have been surprised to receive strange questionnaires through the post recently. You will no doubt realize that I am an E.O.er myself and in fact the questionnaires are part of my dissertation for a Master's degree.

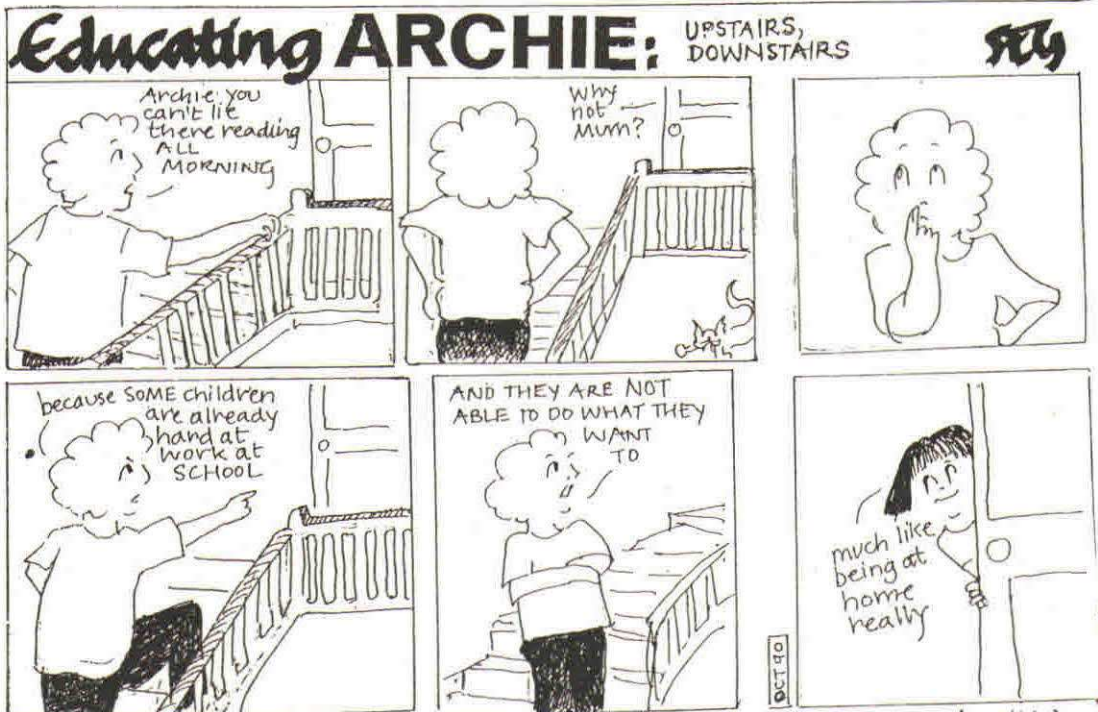
Thanks to all 108 of you who found time to fill it in and give me such valuable information, and thanks to the children for the drawings. Apologies to anyone who was upset at being contacted or by the questionnaire itself.

I am unable to write to all who asked for information but I will put forward an article to E.O. once my research is finished. May I say how touched I was by all who are working against the odds to give their children what they consider they need. Thanks.  
Roy Fullwood

## LEGAL HELP NEEDED

Could any E.O. members who are solicitors please contact Clive Allsopp (address below), who wishes to obtain the transcripts of a domestic court custody case, which he feels may be a useful psychological tool in future dealings with L.E.A. officials. The magistrates had commented positively on home education, having decided that this was not a matter for a welfare report. He also has custody-related reasons for wanting the transcripts.

46 Withern Road,  
Broxtowe Est.,  
Nottingham  
NG8 6FJ23



ARCHIE FANS! Order your Christmas cards NOW (see advert elsewhere in N/L)...

# Regional news

## Avon: Bristol

The Avon Seed Circle is now meeting three times a week for workshops and outings and at other times for play and entertainment. Members from Somerset and Gloucester and visitors always welcomed. Information and current mailing: Julia Hammond, Telephone: 0272 636082 and Poppy Green Telephone 0272 735091

## Avon: Bath

A new coordinator is needed for Bath, who would work closely with Poppy Green, to continue forging links with the L.E.A.

## Bucks

At a recent meeting some interest was shown in setting up a programme of workshops and visits. We have decided on the following dates:

31st October:

Halloween Party at Redfield;  
telephone Elaine  
029 671 3661

24th November:

Tring Zoological  
Museum (meet at entrance at 2 p.m.).

December: Christmas Party to be arranged.

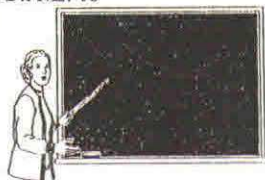
For more information, or to offer suggestions, please phone Valerie or James on (0908) 511247



## Cornwall and Devon

4th December, 1990, at 7.15: evening lecture in the planetarium at Polytechnic South West, Plymouth, especially for E.O. members. Price roughly 50p. Entry by ticket only: send S.A.E. to

Stephen Huggett  
Little Keasts,  
Draynes,  
Liskeard,  
Cornwall.



## Derbyshire

Hello again to all, and a reminder of gatherings booked for late summer, with some additions into the winter:

Saturday, October 20th

Riber Castle, Matlock Wildlife Park. Meet inside entrance at 1.30 p.m. (adults approx. £2.50; children £1.50).

Sunday, November 4th

Bonfire preparations all day at Lynne and Mikes' 18 Park St., Alfreton (0773 836662) Make a guy, build a bonfire and have a party! Please telephone to check, if the weather is dubious.

Saturday, November 17th

We have booked a stall at the Amber Valley Folk Festival (Alfreton Leisure Centre) where we hope to be an information point for home education, and to enjoy ourselves at the same time. Tickets are expensive (around £8 per adult for the day) but the events include an afternoon family Ceilidh, live music, clog and dancing demonstrations and craft stalls, and so on. If you can help us man the stall or want more details, please phone Lynne and

Mike on 0773 836662 or Steph and Peter on 0246 239048

**Saturday 1st December at 1 p.m.**

A gathering at the home of Kerry and Andy. Meet at Alvaston. Phone for details on 0332 754793

**Saturday 19th January noon onwards.** A "clay day" at the Kelks' in Chaddesden, Derby. Phone Shirley Kelk on 0332 675535 for details.

We need suggestions and offers for workshops and gatherings for 1991 and look forward to hearing from you all.

## Cambridgeshire: Peterborough

The Peterborough E.O. group was formed at the start of the summer 'term'. Although we officially fall into the Cambridgeshire region, and the Cambridge group meet up regularly, it is too far for most of the families around here to travel, so we decided to meet up locally for fun and events.

We held a wide range of activities during the first part of the summer - a visit and talk from the post office, a visit to a sewage works, a visit to paper mills to buy paper, and two play/planning sessions. Then by chance, through friends of members, we found that we could organize a series of talks on various musical instruments, so our theme became music. We listened to and learned

about violins, cellos, recorders, saxophones, and guitars, and finished the term with a concert at the cathedral. Although we only have four core families, with 'in school' friends attending some of the sessions, our numbers vary from three to twenty children. Despite being a small group we have been accepted and given



special school-group rates on all our visits, a great financial saving.

Next term we are going to 'do' religion, with visits already arranged to Hindu temple, an old church with bell-ringing, and a modern church. We hope also to visit a synagogue and the cathedral. Each session has something to see, a chance to ask questions, and has an opportunity for play, so is suitable for children of all ages. We shall be doing unconnected events as the opportunities arise. Suggestions have been: a visit to the local wild animal refuge, backstage at the theatre and pantomime, behind the scenes visits to the library and police station.



I am thinking of organizing a Victorian weekend, all in costume doing things the Victorian way, based at a local centre



which has a victorian school room, visiting steam railway and a farm museum for a

Victorian hands-on with farm implements. I would welcome advice from anyone who has organized any such events.

We would love other families who live close to Peterborough to join in with our sessions. Further details can be obtained from me, by sending S.A.E. to me or by telephoning Barbara Dewar, 28 Riseholme, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, Cambs. PE2 0SP Telephone: 0733 233160

## Grampian

July saw Grampian's first meeting. Thanks to Maureen Gordon for opening her house, and to everyone who came and made it an enjoyable day. Another is planned for

October 20th, from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Bring a picnic lunch. Please ring me on 0542 31261 to check the location. Hope to see everyone then. Petra Cortis.

## Hampshire

October 10th: Winchester museum; 10.30  
November 5th: gathering at 11.30, at  
11 The Grove, Penton Grafton,  
Andover

Dec. 12th: Christmas-decoration-make and party - please bring goodies. 11.00 a.m. Please ring 0267 77 3308 to confirm the above dates, times and venues.

## Hereford and Worcestershire

We are now having monthly meetings. For further details, please telephone Bev Turpin-West on (0568) 88473

## Highlands



### Highland swim-in at Dingwall pool

We were delighted that so many people managed to come along: the pool looked almost crowded and all the children in the water were home educated. Great. There was much talk before and after which we hope people found helpful. The 8 families who attended travelled a total of 490 miles - no small undertaking. Thank you all for coming! For those who missed out, send an S.A.E. to Bruce and Christine Wallace for news of our next inspiration.

## Kent

Tuesday 23rd October. The Roman Painted House at Dover. This was built in about 200 A.D. and should be of interest to all ages. Plenty to see including Roman

wall paintings, Roman central heating, over 30 major displays, and a 'touchable'. Teachers packs are available at £1 each and worksheets for a few pence, if required. I have booked an educational visit, at the special school rate of 50p per child and adults free (normally £1). It is situated in the town centre, just off the High Street, a few minutes walk from bus and train stations. Follow the sign posts. Free car park. Meet near entrance at 12 noon. We can visit Dover Museum afterwards if time permits - admission free - quite close by.

Thursday 8th November: 'Open-house' at Sue and Keith Burchett's, 2 Easterfield Cottages, East Malling, Nr. Maidstone. There will be **breadmaking** for a limited number. If you would like to take part, please ring Sue to book a place. A contribution of 50p per person will be required and you can take your bread home. Bring a picnic. Ring Sue on (0732) 870344 to book a place or for directions.

2nd February: Japanese day to celebrate Japanese New Year, at Adult Education Centre, St. Faith's Street, Maidstone. More details in the next newsletter.

Offers are needed of open-houses, with or without workshops, for next year. Please write to Pam Stevenson, 25 Wyndham Road, Dover, Kent CT17 0BH

## North London



We meet the first Sunday of every month from 11.30 to 2.30. Bring some food or buy some in the cafeteria, tea and coffee provided. No activities have been arranged but anyone is welcome to organize arts and crafts or musical events.

We have gone back to our old venue,

Swiss Cottage Community Centre Nursery, Winchester Road, London NW3, very near to Swiss Cottage underground. The building and toilets are fully wheelchair accessible apart from some swing doors. We ask for a contribution of about £1.50. For more information please telephone David Michael (071) 284 2124 or Lesley Barson (081) 969 0893.

Dates booked are: **Nov. 4th, Dec. 2nd.**

Meetings are also arranged during the week. For details of these, telephone Belinda Reid (081) 343 1061.

## South London

Informal meetings for playing and talking and meeting new people. Bring some food and drink to eat or share. E.O. parents and children of any age welcome from any area.

**Sun. 28th October** at Norwood Children's Centre, behind St. Luke's Church, 2-8 Norwood High Street, SE27. 1 - 5 p.m.

**Sun. 25th Nov.** at Norwood as above.

**Sat. 22nd December** at The Child and Parent Centre, The Albany, Douglas Way, SE8 from 11 a.m. - 3.30 p.m. For more details telephone Dorothy (081) 469 0413

## Nottinghamshire

Many thanks to Jacqui for organizing the picnic at Bestwood. Future dates:

**30th October**

Wollaton Park, Nottingham, noon. Meet at playground if fine, or at Natural History Museum (Wollaton Hall) if very wet.

**6th December**, 10 a.m. onwards at Jessica and Alexandras, Mansfield, for session making Christmas/Solstice/Greetings cards. Bring some lunch. Telephone 0623 653694 for directions. E.O. members from

other areas welcome, especially our friends in Derbys. and Lancs.

## Shropshire

**November 10th.** *Fayre maidens defended, dragons slain, armour optional.*

Become medieval for the *daye* at *ye Lindens*. 1.30 p.m. onwards. Bring contributions for tea.

**December 8th.** Whatever happened to the oral tradition? A attempt to prove that we can still entertain ourselves with this story-telling afternoon. 1.30 p.m. onwards.

**January 12th.** You can make pictures move at the Lindens animation workshop. 1.30 p.m. onwards.

**February 9th.** Explore what is left of the Amazon rainforest with Alex, a Friend of the Earth, at the Lindens. 1.30 p.m. onwards.

Visits to Kidderminster Leisure Centre for swimming, and to Birmingham museum also planned.

In addition we meet at the Lindens once a week on Mondays from 10.30 a.m. onwards. Please feel free to come along.

For further details please contact Don and Mandy Patter, The Lindens, Broseley, Telford.

Telephone (0952) 882780.

## East and West Sussex

In August we had outings to the beach, the woods and to a sheep farm to watch the milking. There was a garden party at Anne Rix's house, and we made kites and played outdoor games at the Upper Dicker Hall near Hailsham. We also discussed 'learning a foreign language' at our lively monthly parents' evening.

September's meetings included a visit to

Drusillas in Alfriston, a day out in a wood near Dallington, a tour of the Merrydown Wine & Cidar Co., ice skating in Brighton, pot and model making with clay at Upper Dicket. The parents' meeting was to discuss our forthcoming October half-term workshop for children both in and out of school.

If you would like further details on the October workshop or to know what else we are doing during that month - or are interested in seeing a copy of our monthly newsletter - please telephone Linda Tyrrell on Ripe 358 or send a stamped addressed DL envelope.

### Warwickshire

We hope to organize monthly meetings or outings throughout the autumn. Families and ideas welcome. Contact: Alison Cox - Leamington 613619, or Sue McNamara - Leamington 338199 for further details.

### Wiltshire

Wiltshire members have all been doing their own thing quietly, a bit too quietly. Isn't it time we raised our shy profiles so that we could benefit from an informal gathering or two in North, Mid or South Wilts? I am appealing for help: whilst I enjoy answering enquiries, I cannot take on meetings and activities. Is there anyone out there who could help us break out of our reserve?

Contact: Kate Freeman - (038 086) 470 after 6 p.m.

### North Yorkshire

Coordinator urgently needed as Alan and Fiona Dix are moving to Cumbria. Please

contact Anne Lloyd on York 625289, who will give you their new number, and the coordinators' secretary, Stepanie Fitcher, on 0246 239048

### South Yorkshire

Joan Hoare has kindly offered to be coordinator on a temporary basis. Would anybody who may be able to help as coordinator by mid 1991 please start considering it now? Dineke continues to organize social events.

Christine Park

### West Yorkshire

#### Parents' meeting

**Monday November 12th**, 8 p.m. at Jackie Reed's, 73 Salisbury Road, Armley, Leeds. Telephone Leeds 798793 for directions.

#### Family get-togethers

**October 31st**: farm visit in Leeds followed by a French fun afternoon. Please bring a packed lunch and your wellies. Charge per person. Telephone Kim Wark, Leeds 757473 for further details.

#### Monday, November 26th

Christmas/craft get-together. Bring a food contribution and a craft idea with materials. £1 per family at North Wing Centre, Bradford. Telephone Sue Lyon for further details.

**December 10th**: open house at Sue Lyon's from 10 a.m. Please let me know if you are coming.

#### Important Notice

Anyone wanting to take a more active role in organizing local events, meeting new people etc., or willing to be a West Yorkshire coordinator from January 1st, 1991, please contact Sue Lyon. We, as a family, are going to Canada for one year.

## E.O. financial and legal structure

An open letter to David Michael, Rachel Sanger and other similarly confused people!

We have been members of E.O. for ten years now and have been involved in the 'running' thereof for the past eight years so feel that we are in a position to comment on David's and Rachel's letters.

Any newcomer is likely to be very confused by a first taste of an E.O. business meeting! We were, at our first meeting - not knowing anyone else and half the time not knowing what people were talking about - so we mostly listened at that meeting, and the next, and the next. All this was before the current "association limited by guarantee" (loosely referred to as the Ltd. Co.) was set up. Looking back, it seems to us that things were not very different then, so it is not especially the Ltd. Co. that is wasting people's time or money.

We will answer David's points first:

"1) that some of our valuable time together was being spent on listening to conflicting advice on the legal and financial structures we have."

Agreed. But in order for people to know what a few of us had been doing/finding out in between meetings, and to sort out just what was and was not possible, given our current structures, this was actually necessary. We are afraid to have to say that this need would be more apparent to someone who had regularly attended meetings recently than to a total newcomer. We do not see what can be done to prevent this sort of situation arising. It seems to us that we want to encourage new folk, but it is inevitable that they will find things confusing to begin with.

"2) that legally we have a two tier structure of membership, and that ordinary members like myself (not company shareholders) should not legally be part of some of the decision making."

Everybody subscribes to E.O. Association Ltd. There are no 'company shareholders'. Those of us who are prepared to put time and effort into running E.O. are generally "signed-up members", which means that if E.O. goes bankrupt we are liable to each pay the princely sum of £10 to help pay off debts, and nothing more. It has nothing to do with protection for officers, or others, being sued for giving wrong advice (as David mentions later). The insurance cover for this is very expensive, and when it was realized that it did not really cover what was needed, a decision was made not to re-insure. E.O. *does* have public liability insurance. Any subscriber to E.O. who chooses to attend a meeting has an equal right to comment. The decision making does, legally, have to be done by the signed-up members, who are, after all, ultimately responsible, but we always take everyone's point of view into account. Our efforts to hear all opinions and to reach a consensus inevitably makes the process time-consuming. Democracy at this level is very long-winded - hence our exhausting ten hour meetings.

"3) that we now have become unnecessarily registered for V.A.T. and so charge ourselves 15% extra which we donate to the government."

Because E.O.'s total turnover per annum was over the stated limit by 1988 we were legally obliged to register for V.A.T. Much of E.O.'s business is zero-rated (well over half) so we do not, in fact, charge ourselves 15% extra.

"4) that because we are a limited company we have to have very strict accounting and spend a lot of money employing a chartered accountant."

True. But we do not think that is necessarily a bad thing. We do have to have accurate accounting because if we make any surplus we are liable to tax, Ltd. Co. or not. The full accounts are available at national E.O. meetings along with the treasurer.

"5) that our charitable constitution/trust deed is undemocratic and does not allow the membership to have absolute control."

There are no 'members' of the charitable trust and the Charities Commissioners make it very plain that, and we quote, "I must stress that the charity is in *no way* accountable to the Association, which can have no control or say over its activities." It would appear that this would be the situation with *any* charitable trust. The present trustees are looking into this and at ways of using the trust funds that are acceptable both to members of E.O. and to the Charities Commission.

A small group of members, including ourselves, are looking into the structures within E.O. and will be holding discussions at Featherstone Castle, which will probably be reported on in a future newsletter - once something useful to communicate is formulated!

Now to Rachel's letter. We do not feel that the fact that E.O. is "...a limited company and a charitable trust..." cost(s) us a lot of time and money." Some of each maybe, but, as we have already said, time was 'wasted' previously, and whatever we do, legalities such as V.A.T. and tax will come into the picture somewhere.

The charitable trust is not particularly "...a legal and administrative headache with almost no advantages." The current trustees are looking into ways of using the trust funds, which has not been done effectively in the past, (see report on page 3) and we feel that it could have a particular role to play in the future, even if it is not exactly the one people envisioned.

If the business side of E.O. ceases to be a Ltd. Co. then we would feel very unhappy about being associated with it. At least at the present time we do not need to worry about losing our home and assets in that direction. We think we have already covered the point about subscribers and signed-up members but we will reiterate the important point, that is, we are all subscribers (commonly referred to as 'mem-

bers'); some of us have just accepted a bigger responsibility and a heavier commitment and work load than others. Any subscribers are welcome to get involved (as Rachel wishes to be).

We think that to say "Our activities are small scale and simple." is understating what is involved. We often wish that were true and would like to see something evolve that would fulfil that criterion and that would benefit each member as much as possible.

**Bruce and Christine Wallace**

### UPDATE FROM W. SUSSEX

My letter (no. 75, page 33) regarding Seth's intention to start at a local school needs a small update. He changed his mind, much to my relief. He said it was boring!

So it is onward with enthusiasm. I shall be contacting all West Sussex E.O.ers shortly with a view to meeting up for regular workshops. If East Sussex can do it so well, why can't we?  
**Collette Bradley, Coordinator.**

### "SATISFYING YOUR EDUCATION AUTHORITY"

by Pip Rupik

Rights and duties, what authorities expect and can demand, tackling letters/forms, ideas to help satisfy your authority, increasing the 'evidence', a specimen curriculum/syllabus.

£1.20 incl. p&p; cheques payable to  
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Armthorpe,  
Doncaster DN3 2AT.  
Telephone 0302 833596

## CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY OF EDUCATION OTHERWISE ASSOCIATION LIMITED MEMBERS' MEETING HELD AT UNSTONE GRANGE ON 23<sup>RD</sup> JUNE 1990

There were 52 members present and a fairly long agenda.

**Under Matters Arising From Previous Minutes,** was a complaint that these had contained allegations against a named former coordinator of E.O. which were both hurtful and inaccurate. This matter was taken very seriously and Liz Ramsay was asked to write to the member on behalf of E.O. to offer apologies and an explanation. A decision, taken at a Featherstone Castle meeting, was that minutes should not be published before approval and that an edited Chairperson's report be submitted to the journal instead, was confirmed.

**Under E.O. Publications** there was discussion about payment of honoraria to persons updating publications sold for E.O. After some debate, it was decided that it was appropriate so to do. It was decided that the original author be offered first refusal opportunity, otherwise recruiting people with appropriate expertise. It was further decided that Sarah Guthrie will be paid up to £600 to update *Early Years*, and that Anne and Rob Wade, with the help of Sylvia Jeffs, should bring their legal expertise to bear on *School Is Not Compulsory* (S.I.N.C.) with similar honorarium, and that Bruce Cox would be asked if he wished to update *Later Years*. It was also decided to write off the remaining copies of S.I.N.C. and *Early Years*, because they are out of date.

### **E.O. Central Address/Telephone Helpline**

A search and support group was set up to recommend a successor to Janet Everdell, who is giving up this function (thanks to her for her years of committed hard work for children and families in the cause of educational choice).

### **Charitable Trust Report - Changes To The Financial Structures Of The Trust And The Association**

The Treasurer reported that difficulties had arisen due to an alleged conflict of interest between E.O. Charitable Trust and E.O. Association Limited. A charity is not permitted to promote a company, and the charity's trustees need to be independent and not responsible to the company. It seems that E.O.'s present structure is not necessarily the best

one for our needs. It was decided that the trustees, the financial sub-committee, plus Felix Polkowski and David Michael should explore this issue and structural ways forward for E.O.

The Treasurer also intimated that there should only be one E.O. Association Ltd, account operating and members should not open mini accounts in E.O.'s name. He also asked that petty cash vouchers should be used when floats are paid out to help with the accounting. There was discussion about members' expenses being paid out in cash at meetings with the Treasurer indicating that this was sometimes needed, but with caution being expressed about the wisdom of bringing and holding reasonably large amounts of cash at meetings (to me the sense of the meeting was that people needing to be paid in cash would contact the treasurer beforehand and that he would bring only that cash to the meeting and pay it out at the beginning of the meeting, and that there would be an increase in the number of signatories to avoid the situation arising when nobody could be found at a meeting to counter-sign cheques).

### **Trustees' Report**

Christine Wallace confirmed that the Trustees of E.O. Charitable Trust must be completely independent of E.O. Association Ltd. and responsible only to the Charities Commission, and that the fund cannot be used to promote a company. At present the trust holds £6000, and a further £2000 is owed to the trust by the Association. The interest income needs to be used and the trustees will establish how to use this. The trustees will remain at three for the time being until the present situation is resolved. They are Christine Wallace, Bruce Wallace, and Lesley Kilbride.

### **There were a number of brief points:**

The French organization, *Les Enfants d'Abord*, "Children First", was mentioned by Alison Maffham. It was agreed to support this by offering an exchange membership as it is the French equivalent to E.O.

Lois Cook mentioned that she had designed a leaflet to be enclosed with membership forms

giving information and illustrations of publications sold by E.O.

There was a passing reference to work experience and to the publicity journal, Pat Knox's TV programme, *An Education In Fear* was mentioned. She has a video and will send copies to anyone who requests them and is intending to take a video of her programme to Featherstone meeting.

#### **Urgent Notices From Officers**

##### **Chairperson**

Jenny White has resigned as Chair and as a Trustee of the charity.

Peter Edwards, as Vice-Chairman, will stand in for the Chairperson for the time being.

##### **Steering Committee Report**

Mention was made of decisions made since the last meeting.

##### **Membership Secretary**

Christine Wallace is due to resign and has received several applications for the job. Recommended Meryl Cummings.

##### **Coordinators' Secretary**

Coordinators are needed in Berkshire and Lothian.

New coordinators are:

Avon: Poppy Green

Leicester: Lucy and Keith Charlton

Kent: Pat and Paul Holroyd

E. London: Sue Eldred and Toni Cushman

London West and Middlesex:

Rachel Sanger and Steve Glynn

##### **Legal Group**

Reported on successful workshop in Andover in May. Indicated that the Labour Party proposes to extend the National Curriculum to 'otherwise' education. After discussion it was decided that Anne and Rob Wade and Jill Gillings would draft a letter people could send to prospective and sitting Labour Members of Parliament.

##### **Publications Secretary**

Lesley is resigning; no replacement as yet. Editors needed for newsletters.

##### **Any Other Business**

Concern was expressed that a freelance writer was present during the meeting. Issues like privacy of members was raised. It was proposed that, at members meetings, if anyone is not a subscriber, members present should have a vote to decide whether these people should stay or not.

#### **National Home Education Day**

It was agreed to have a week in the spring of 1991 to promote home education. One day would be especially set aside but publicity events would be held throughout the week all over the country. Positive ideas are needed, and offers of help, too. We would hope to have publicity via TV and radio. Suggestions are for open houses, craft days, displays in halls and libraries and in fact anything to publicize people's right to home-educate.

##### **Future Venues**

Featherstone Castle is booked for our next gathering, 10th - 16th September 1990. Suitable venues are needed for further future gatherings and several people are making enquiries.

Mention was made of encouraging all members to ensure that their local libraries and Citizen's Advice Bureaux have information on E.O.

Green advertising in newsletters. It was explained that members are allowed to advertise if it is of interest to E.O. as a whole at 10p per word. All adverts are printed subject to space being available. Charities may advertise free, but if profit making then 10p per word.

##### **South Devon Local E.O. Group**

A resource centre, open school, and learning centre is being set up. They have raised some funds and would like to open a residential centre. Unfortunately, E.O. cannot help them.

I think it is appropriate to express the thanks of the membership of E.O. to Janet Everdell for her committed hard work and expenditure of time over the years. As the person responsible for the Telephone Helpline she had often to deal with difficult and harrowing enquiries and also allowed her address and telephone to be used as central contact point forwarding information on to others in the organization. Thanks to Jenny White for being such a good hearted chair for the past while.

#### **PEN-PALS LATE EXTRA**

Pip Green, 15 Bellevue, Clifton, Bristol BS8 1DB, who is nine and has never been to school, would like some new friends to write to. He likes adventure game books, skateboarding, and playing 'Go'.

# Notices

## CHAIRPERSON NEEDED

Someone with experience of Education Otherwise, and an interest in, and ability to both keep the wider view in mind and also focus in on 'here and now' issues as they arise, and facilitate the three meetings a year as needed, following the resignation of the previous Chairperson, Jenny White.

Anybody interested please contact Vice-Chairman, Peter Edwards 031 229 6259 or at 74 Gilmore Place, Edinburgh EH3 9NX.

## MAYBE WE CAN HELP?

Deb Bennett and 11 year old Ruth are a vegan family beginning home-education in September (we *hope*). We welcome visits from other E.O. families, but most of all we hope to offer emergency accommodation to children of families suffering illness or other problems; 0 - 16 year old children welcome. We have no car or telephone but we can ring you back upon receiving a letter, or telephone call via Stanstead Police or neighbour, Elizabeth Blake (across the road) whose number is (0279) 812004. We are on the London to Cambridge rail service. Children visiting and staying will need to bring a sleeping bag and up to £2.50 per day to cover swimming, food, and travel expenses etc. (negotiable, of course) if possible. There is no religious preaching here, no unethical food, and no competitiveness to worry about. Pets kept; pets welcome.

Deb Bennett, 'Hope Cottage', 39 Woodfields, Stanstead, Essex CM24 8AL

## HELP!

Derbyshire E.O. group needs photographs, newspaper cuttings, children's work, or whatever, as a backdrop for a proposed home education stall at Amber Folk Festival (Alfreton, Derbyshire, 17th November, 1990). Please send anything that might help to Steph and Peter, 50 Springfield Avenue, Ashgate, Chesterfield, or to Lynne and Mike, 18 Park Street, Alfreton, OE5 7JE. We promise to return promptly anything you send. Thanks.

## BBC SCHOOLS BROADCAST PUBLICATIONS

A reminder to all who use the booklets to accompany television and radio programmes. The mailing office at Wetherby is unable to split packs of 5 for home educators. If you need single copies of any of the booklets write to Mr. Andrew McCallum, B.B.C. Education, London W5 2PA, who assures me that he will help wherever possible.

Lynne Greenhough

## CONTINUUM TRUST

The Alternative Communities Exchange has been formed to link people with communities. Please write, with S.A.E., briefly saying something about yourself, or your community, for inclusion in our newsletter circulating communities seeking new members, and people considering joining or starting communities, to A.C.E., Church Cottage, Lower Freystrop, Haverfordwest, Dyfed SA62 4ET

## COORDINATORS URGENTLY NEEDED

In some counties there is no coordinator at all. This means that new members have no one to encourage them, no one to reassure them that home education works in practice, no one to be on their side in disagreements with the local authority.

If you live in one of the following counties, have a telephone, and your school-age children are learning at home, maybe you could help.

The counties needing coordinators are:

Avon: Bath  
 Berkshire  
 Cleveland  
 Dyfed  
 Humberside  
 Lincolnshire  
 Lothian  
 South Yorkshire  
 North Yorkshire  
 West Yorkshire

Someone is also needed to cover the whole of Ireland.

Apart from work with new members, what you put into being a coordinator will depend very much on you, the local situation, and the other members in your area. For most of us it is not a very time consuming job. Being able to listen is more important than being able to talk. You do not have to know all the answers straight away. Help and advice is on hand if you ask for it. If you are interested or want to know more, contact me,  
 Stephanie Fitcher, 50 Springfield Ave.,  
 Chesterfield, Derbyshire  
 Telephone 0246 239048

## SHOULD COORDINATORS BE REQUIRED TO HAVE CHILDREN OF SCHOOL AGE OUT OF SCHOOL?

West Sussex E.O. comment on the report of the coordinators' meeting at Unstone Grange which appeared in the August newsletter (no. 75; p. 40).

We would like to suggest the following amendment to the paragraph about requirements for selection of coordinators:

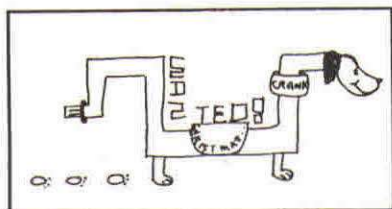
after "...children of school age out of school," insert, "or have substantial experience of home education."

Our reason is that our group functions very well with a coordinator whose children now have to attend school, but were educated at home for three years, and who is still committed to the idea of home education. Other members of the group have responsibility for some of the functions, in particular producing a local newsletter, organizing local activities and fund-raising. While our present coordinator would be happy to step down if someone else wanted to take over the functions of contacting new members, helping members deal with L.E.A.s, and providing basic legal information, we as a group, are happy with the situation as it stands.

We also feel that the requirement as stated in the report would disbar someone whose children had reached the age of 16 after being entirely home educated from being a coordinator, and that seems a pity.

Anne Rix, C. Simpson, A. & G. Smith,  
 Pia Aldridge, J. Lawes, S. Nolan, Ivan &  
 Linda Tyrrell, Erica Richardson, Fiona  
 Wilson, Sue Petschaft (East Sussex E.O.).

Please help our 'Christmas Crankers' market survey by answering this simple question as honestly as you can, helping many other Crankcos: what drives you (&/or your household members) CRAANKERS?? One word answers, serious answers, ridiculous answers will all be published with each person's Christian name.



WIN A PRIZE TOO! Describe a good family game and you could find an extra presie in your stocking if your cranky game is voted the breaker of party icicles, melter of frosty smiles, stem looks, stiff uppers, and turns us all into helpless Christmas merrimakers....

Other contributions welcome subject to stern editorship on the part of Crankers' prestigious owners.... so risk a bit of time!! Send to "Christmas Crankers", Wayside Farm, Etchilhampton, Devizes, Wilts. SN10 3JT



## MATHS SUPPLEMENT: DATA NEEDED!

I am going to write a maths supplement for our newsletter, and would be grateful for any contributions.

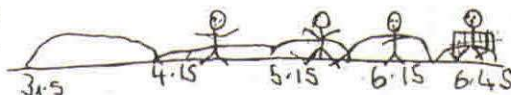
Please send mathematical problems you have solved, or *cannot* solve, and any general comments about mathematics or mathematics education.

I would be particularly pleased to receive transcripts of conversations relating to problem solving and concept building, and *pictures*. Things like:

**Problem:**

A man starts work at 4.15 p.m.  
He works for two and a half hours.  
When does he finish?

**Response:**



I am also writing a book along these lines, and hope to have a draft ready soon.

Hope you will be able to help.

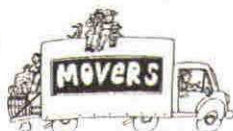
Dr. Brian Williamson  
46 Wellington Road,  
New Brighton,  
Merseyside L45 2NG

## WE ARE MOVING - PLEASE HELP!

On 7th September we are leaving London and moving to Olympic Cottage, Carters-piece, English Bicknor, Glos. (telephone will be installed on 17th September). This will be a total change for us, from central London to rural Gloucestershire, and though we are looking forward to it very much we are also afraid that we may be rather lonely.

We would love to hear from any E.O. families within reach in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Avon, Gwent or wherever. We are very willing to travel to make contact. Please get in touch if you can. Advice and information would also be very welcome.

Rachel Sanger  
Steve Glynn  
Helen Sanger  
(5 years)



do you sing to/with your children?  
or do you claim to be 'tone deaf'?

For those who think they can't sing, help is at hand. John Elenor (an E.O. member), after running successful classes in London, has now distilled his experience into a pamphlet-&-cassette package called

### SINGING FOR THE TONE DEAF

available to E.O. members at the discounted price of £9.50 (inc. p & p) from:  
John Elenor  
239 Earls Court Road,  
London SW5 9AH

## CARING FOR LIFE INTERNATIONAL

C.F.L.I. is a recently formed Christian organization, which, at the moment, is responding to requests for help from Romania. As you know from media reports, the old regime has left a legacy of orphaned, abandoned and neglected children, often living in squalid and unstimulating surroundings. C.F.L.I. hopes to open three family group homes for up to twenty children in each. The children will be aged 3 - 16. Some have been traumatized by things they have experienced, others are very ill or severely handicapped; *these* children will be taught in their homes. Children of 16+ will continue to be cared for in a different type of home.

I do hope that you may be able to help. Toys are just not available in Romania *at all*. If you have any toys or educational equipment of any kind that your children have outgrown, would you consider giving them to C.F.L.I. for Romania? Puzzles, construction toys, maths equipment, games, simple English books, cuddly toys, even baby toys - all would be welcome. Would your children like to make a game with rules written in simple English to send? If you have anything you wish to donate, please contact me, or C.F.L.I. direct at Crag House Farm, Smithy Lane, Leeds LS16 7NH Telephone (0532) 61213 (Collection can possibly be arranged). Thank you all.

Kim Wark,  
21 Drummond Avenue, Leeds,  
West Yorkshire LS16 5JZ  
Telephone 0532 757473

## WHERE TO GET WHAT

The following publications are available from: Bruce & Christine Wallace  
25 Diabiag, Achnasheen,  
Ross-shire IV22 2HE

### **School is not compulsory (SINC)**

- a guide to your rights £2.50

### **Early years**

learning suggestions for under twelves £2.50

### **Later years**

learning for older children, plus G.C.S.E. £2.50

### **Teach your own**

by John Holt - philosophy of home education £3.85

### **Schools out**

by Jean Bendell - a good why and how book by an E.O. member and long term home educator £5.95

### **E.O. newsletters**

backcopies for '89 and '90 £1.00 each

### **E.O. newsletter bargain basement**

any four copies (our selection) from '87 to '88 £1.20

### **newly produced Newsletter digest**

90 page selection of the best from '82 to '86 £1.50

### **Home education and the law**

by Woolf and Deutsch - the law in England and Wales with regard to children who are 'de-registered' £2.00

### **Education now**

issue no. 8, devoted to home education £2.50

### **Growing without schooling**

the newsletter of E.O.'s parallel organization in the U.S.A. (six issues per year, starting in March) send £10.00 to Jill Gillings, Ballaglonny Farm, Quales Orchard, Ronague, Castletown, Isle of Man.

### **E.O. stationery, reuse labels, membership forms, E.O. leaflets and handbills, available from:**

Lucy Charlton, 2 Wistow Lane,  
Newton Harcourt, LE8 0FT

**For reuse labels send £2.00 for 100**

Prices quoted are for E.O. members only.

### Regional secretaries

East Anglia	Sandie Cottee	0268 733259
Midlands	Hazel Clawley	021 722 7165
The North	Mick and Jennie White	0969 23544
Scotland	Brenda Holliday	0786 832042
Wales	Miryam Bush	0269 861069
London	Genevieve Bridgman	081 341 0751

## EDUCATION OTHERWISE OFFICERS

**General Enquiries** 25 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbot,  
Cambridgeshire, PE18 9AN  
Telephone Helpline: 0480 63130

**General Secretary** Pam Stevenson, 25 Wyndham Road,  
Dover, Kent CT17 0BH

### Membership Secretaries

**Scotland and Northern England** Meryl Cumins, 131 John Street,  
Larkhall, Lanarkshire ML9 2EU  
Telephone 0698 887977

**South East** Valerie Common, 19 New Road,  
Castlethorpe, Milton Keynes MK19 7EH  
Telephone: 0908 511247

**Wales and Midlands** Gillian Murely, 84 Witney Road, Stafford ST17 0BP  
Telephone: Stafford 48753

**London and Home Counties** Lois Cook, 34 Beacon Road,  
Herne Bay, Kent CT6 6DJ  
Telephone: 02273 67059

**South West** Maggie Swartridge, 32 Carrey Park,  
Polperro, Cornwall PL13 2JF  
Telephone: 0503 72087

**Publishing Secretary** Lesley Kilbride, Fearnmore by Shieldag,  
Strathcarron, Wester Ross IV54 8XX  
Telephone: 052 05278

**Treasurer** Michael Cook, 34 Beacon Road,  
Herne Bay, Kent CT6 6DJ  
Telephone: 02273 67059

**Chairperson** Vacant.

**Special Needs** Sylvia Jeffs, 16 St. Bernards Road, Solihull B92 7BB  
Telephone: 021 706 6460

**Subscription Renewals,  
Membership List, Change of Address** Bob Emmett, 12 Taylor Avenue,  
Dolgarrog, Conway, Gwynedd LL32 8JN  
Telephone: 0492 69355

**Publicity Officer** Jo Rust, 8 Church End, Gamlingay,  
Nr. Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 3EP  
Telephone: 0767 50032

**Coordinators' Secretary** Stephanie Fletcher, 50 Springfield Avenue,  
Ashgate, Chesterfield S40 1HL  
Telephone: 0246 239048

**Education Otherwise** is a membership organization 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 principle 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 a 9" x 4" S.A.E. to:

Education Otherwise  
25 Common Lane,  
Hemmingford Abbots,  
Cambridgeshire  
PE18 9AN

CHANGE OF DATE

Education Otherwise A.G.M.

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 13<sup>th</sup>

January 1991

at Cliff College, Calver, near Sheffield

Self-catering or group-catering available

Family self-catering: £5 per person per night

Group-catering: over 18 yrs. £10 per night

10-17 yrs. £7 per night

under 10 yrs. £5 per night

The weekend will start on Thursday evening.

Please indicate when you will arrive.

Bookings and enquiries (with SAE) to:-

Stephanie Fatcher  
50 Springfield Ave  
Chesterfield  
Derbys.  
S40 1HL

Lynne Greenhough  
18 Park St.  
Alfreton  
Derbys.  
DE5 7JE

