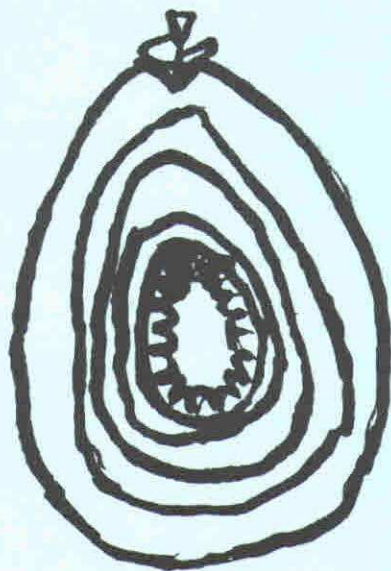
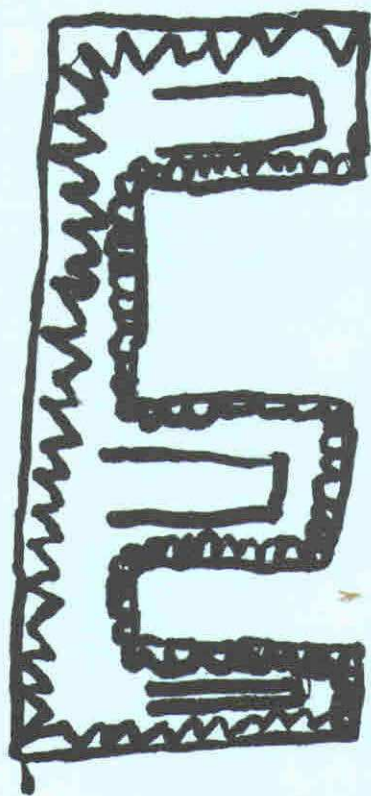


# EDUCATION OTHERWISE NEWSLETTER

August & September 1993 / Number 93



# EDUCATION OTHERWISE

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## THE NEWSLETTER

This issues was edited by:  
**Andy & Kerry Meek**  
15 Meadow Close, Spondon, Derby  
DE21 7GS.

This bulk of this issue was prepared using That's Write version 2.07 running on an Atari STE with 2MB memory. The printer was a dot matrix, Star LC24-200. The masters were printed onto A4 using Times 24 point, Futurist Oblique 18 point, Helvetica Bold 14 point and the printer's native Courier font at 10cpi.

Special thanks to Vi McDonnell for the illustrations.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the editor or of Education Otherwise as a whole. This newsletter is produced by a volunteer member of Education Otherwise and its primary purpose is to provide support and communication between members.

Send your contribution (clearly marked "for publication") as soon as possible to the appropriate editor (see below) and please include your name, address and telephone number. Your contribution is more likely to be included if it is concise.

Note that any item published in the newsletter may be reprinted by other home education magazines in the UK or abroad. If you

do not want your piece reproduced without your consent, please state clearly that you want to retain the copyright.

Special request for next issue:  
Joy and George have asked for your contributions to be typed if at all possible. Even better would submissions on 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ " or 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " IBM PC compatible disk.

## NEXT EDITORS

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Hurst Bank Farm, Troughstones,  
Biddulph Moor, Stoke-on-Trent  
ST8 7RT Tel (0782) 515679

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**Robin Carmody**  
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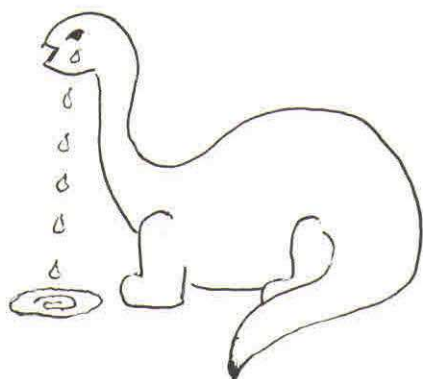
## SUPPLEMENT

"Learning through literature"

**Sandie Cottee & Betty Ball**  
c/o 17 South View Road,  
Rettendon Common, Chelmsford  
CM3 8DX Tel (0268) 733259

DEADLINE 1st SEPTEMBER '93

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THE EO NEWSLETTER  
GO THE WAY OF  
THE DINOSAUR! —

I AM UNABLE TO  
CO-ORDINATE ANY MORE  
ISSUES OF THE  
NEWSLETTER —

A VOLUNTEER IS  
URGENTLY NEEDED

FOR DETAILS AND A CHAT  
PHONE LYNNE GREENHOUGH  
18, PARK ST. ALFRETON DE57JE  
0773-836662

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## EDITORIAL

In the Spring of this year we attended a conference for Christian home educators at Kinmel Hall, Wales - only the second of its kind in the UK. One of the organisers said to me that he was convinced EO would not survive much longer. His argument was that EO is wracked by internal divisions over organisational structure, has members with polar differences of opinion on education as well as religion, politics and parentcraft and has no mechanisms for deriving consensus in order to speak convincingly with one voice to promote alternative education or campaign on specific issues. He is making arrangements to set up a Christian home education support organisation, positioning it to fill the predicted gap when EO collapses.

There is a danger that there will develop a multiplicity of separated minor factional interest groups each based on education plus some other binding element such as religion or lifestyle. I believe that it is imperative to have one strong, authoritative focus for alternative education support in the UK. Without this, effort will be duplicated, support fragmented and the situation seem to outsiders like the moving planks of a funhouse floor.

What is to be done? An organisational answer is to form a federation of alternative educational groups with a 'lowest common denominator' constitution. A central support body would handle services such as discounts, legal representation, media statements and negotiations with government. It would have some mechanism for deriving policy (such as opinion polls) and some means for expressing it (such as a manifesto). The federated groups would be free to pursue their own line without aggravating others while receiving the benefits of (and contributing to) the larger partnership.

EO Limited should offload its ragged edges and be rationalised into a slick central support, while a new EO membership organisation should become one of the federated groups and focus on its historical roots of radical lifestyle and philosophy. This is not the demise of EO. It is evidence of its success that its current membership is now too numerous and diverse to be served by an organisation deliberately constructed around informality.

This is an organisational answer, but there is also a personal, human-scale answer. It is for each of us to reinforce our determination to support and encourage our fellow home-educators and their families without exception.

-----  
There is an EO tradition whereby editors are expected to extoll the miseries of preparing a newsletter - much as a best man's speech must detail the groom's bachelor indiscretions. In our case, the curse of the newsletter had us move house one week before the deadline. As the job is apparently always so onerous, perhaps editors deserve more formal recognition and mutual support. An 'old newsletter editors' tie maybe with an emblem comprising three bottles representing aspirin, tipex and midnight oil; plus a special handshake which can only be developed by typing 36 pages at 5 wpm with two fingers.

Try it out at the next gathering. And remember - B.A.P.

# WHO CAN YOU TRUST?

by Joshua Mostafa

In the run up to the General election last year a lot of us were horrified by Labour's heavy-handed approach to education (the imposition of the National Curriculum across the board etc), and indeed the Liberal Democrats seemed not to be any more helpful. Only the Conservatives appeared sympathetic with EO. In the February/March 1992 newsletter there was a letter from Michael Fallon, Under-Secretary of State, to Francis Maud MP.

"We view the 'education otherwise' provisions as a means of accommodating ... the wishes of ... parents who provide or contemplate providing this mode of education for their children. We wish to see it retained, and its exclusion from the requirements of the National Curriculum can be seen as recent evidence of this aim," wrote Mr Fallon. The inference is clear: We'll protect your rights, Labour won't.

## FIASCO

Since then we have seen a major government fiasco over education. John Patten fought the case of the SATs against most of the teachers in the country. Looking at the papers now it is generally concluded that they weren't worth the school wastepaper baskets they were thrown into. Mr Patten was defending the indefensible.

But it doesn't affect us, does it? They might have attempted to browbeat the teachers into making the children sit the notorious tests, but they haven't tried to impose the National Curriculum on us.

## HOODWINKED

And why not? However autocratic the attitude of the Labour Party over the National Curriculum, however infuriating Labour's lack of understanding, can we be hoodwinked into thinking that Mr Fallon is telling the truth? That the Government has let us continue to do our own thing out of respect for our wishes, and not because it can't be bothered to change existing legislation?

## RIGHTS ANNULLED

Perhaps I'm being unfair. Maybe the Government truly believes in freedom for the individual. But if it does, how is it that the right of the private candidate to sit GCSEs in an open centre is to be annulled in Summer 1995?

From 1995 onwards, private candidates (including EOers) will not be able to send their GCSE coursework to the local examination board, and sit their GCSEs at an open centre for private candidates, as they can now. Instead, they will have to enroll in a college or a tech that teaches GCSEs, or join an evening class (if there are any spaces).

Where do EOers taking GCSEs fit in with the Tories' grand scheme for education? How many EO parents want to send their children to a tech instead of studying at home? Staying at home is what EO is all about, surely.

At least Labour and the Liberal Democrats were honestly unreasonable in their education policies. Like the promises in the Conservative manifesto, Mr Fallon's commitment to freedom in education for EOers is proving to be as real as the "listening" Mr Patten paid to teachers.

4 Mandalay Court  
London Road, Brighton  
East Sussex BN1 8QU



Friday, October 29th. to  
Tuesday, November 2nd.

+++++++

Education Otherwise Association Ltd  
AGM on Saturday October 30th.

For details of the gathering please write to  
Alan and Pat Balfe, 10 Highfields Road, Mountsorrel, Loughborough,  
Leics. LE12 7HH or telephone 0533-376752

# REGIONAL DIARY

## **SOUTH DEVON**

- EXETER** Contact Sarah Payne (0884) 855583 for details of fortnightly meetings.
- PLYMOUTH** contact Rachel Mearshall (0822) 852332 or Vera Henderson (0752) 252217 for meetings at members' houses.
- TOTNES** contact us, Sammy and Nick, (0548) 830716 for details of weekly meetings at Woodlands adventure playpark and other activities.

We've been busy with printmaking, swimming, science days, canoeing, letterboxing, circus skills, drama and various visits including the Western Morning News printing works, the Theatre Royal, Exeter Cathedral and a fire station.

We were going to do a local newssheet but we can't put our energies into that project at this time, so we're asking members who want to be kept informed to contact us and we'll link up with a telephone tree.

## **HAMPSHIRE**

There is a lot of activity in the Solent area such as meetings, workshops and outings. These are listed on a local newsletter. To join in contact Michael Taveler (0243) 373903 or Ann Hasler (0329) 661238.

## **EAST SUSSEX**

We have Parents' Evenings once a month, and several activities for families every week. Details are not usually finalised however in time to include them in the national magazine. We publish a local newsletter every month which gives full details (subscription £8 a year, cheque payable to E.S.E.O. - write to Lyndon Pugh, The Barn, Mongers Farm, Barcombe, Lewes BN8 5BQ). You might prefer to telephone Ian Lawes on (0273) 559275 or Anne Rix (see below) .

As well as visits to museums, historic buildings etc, we meet for swimming, ice skating, CB orienteering, survival techniques, craft and games activities, wheelies, bonfires ... you name it! Look forward to seeing you.

Ann Rix, East Sussex Co-ordinator, Silver Birch, Firgrove Road, Cross-in-Hand, Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 0QL Tel (0435) 862794.

## **LONDON - SOUTH**

Meetings for all EO members continue at the East Greenwich Community Centre, Christchurch Way, Greenwich, SE10 every other week. BR Maze Hill, Buses 180, 177, 286. These meetings are mainly social with plenty of space to play. Painting materials are available. Other activities are sometimes provided by the families who come.

Dates: September 10th, 24th; October 8th, 22nd; November 5th,

19th; December 3rd, 17th.

Please phone first if you have never been before in case there is a last minute change of dates. Susan Wilson, 081-858-8714.

There are often 30 or more children at these meetings, and quite a few people have expressed the need for another smaller, quieter group for the under 7s. Dawn Glasson is trying to set this up. If you're interested, contact her after mid September on 081-319-2290.

## BERKSHIRE

We have now finished skating for the summer, but plan to start again in the summer. We skate at the Slough Ice Arena once a fortnight where we get admission and skate hire for £1 each and a quarter of an hour lesson for £2.50 for the group.

We are planning to meet once a month from September in Slough or alternatively in Slough and Dinton Pastures, near Reading, or anywhere else suitable that anyone can suggest. We would like to hold a planning meeting so that anyone interested in participating and/or contributing can agree dates and activities. Some suggested activities so far include: making musical instruments from junk, pottery, making Christmas cards and decorations. All ideas and home educators are welcome. To agree a date for a meeting, please phone either: Liz Howlett (0734) 581805 or Karen Sternhell (0628) 32262.

## BEDS & BUCKS

Telephone if you need to know more: June McDonald, (0234) 341375, or Valerie Gommon (0908) 511247, or Caroline Cooke (0296) 720026.

- Mon 23 August 2:00pm - 4:00pm Monthly get-together at Isobel Hewitt's house, 66 Goldington Avenue, Bedford Tel (0234) 345780.
- Thu 9th Sept 1:30pm Swimming, Oasis, Bedford. Price £1.75 adults, £1.25 children.
- Sat 18th Sept Session by a herpetologist with slide show, live reptiles and amphibians. June McDonald's, 10 Reynolds Close, Bedford. Tel (0234) 341375.
- Mon 27th Sept Monthly get-together at Isobel Hewitt's.
- Thu 7th Oct 1:45pm Session at 'Activity World' in Rollers, Denhigh Centre, Bletchley. Price: adults 60p, children £1.50.
- Mon 25th Oct Monthly get-together at Isobel Hewitt's.

## DYFED

Sunday 19th September - Equinox celebration at Cwmrhaffau. Bring music, dance, stories or activities and a lunch to share. John, Sally, Janet and David Tel (0239) 811118.

# CHESHIRE

## INSIGHT INTO INDUSTRY TOURS

We have just found out about these tours organised through Cheshire County Council's Tourism Unit. You can visit anything from a milk bottling factory through a wallpaper factory or British Aerospace to a water treatment plant, recycling centre or a working quarry. There are age restrictions on many of them though, and this year most are already heavily booked since the programme came out in April. They are operating a reserve list however, for this year's tours and if you contact them and ask to be put on their mailing list you will get the programme for next year as soon as it comes out. If you live too far away from Cheshire, do write for their brochure/calendar called 'Insight Into Industry' and perhaps send it to your own local council telling them "how popular/what a good idea" etc. Then maybe these tours could happen in other parts of the country too. Each tour only costs £1 per person and the one we've been on so far was fascinating and so much easier than trying to arrange our own EO visit. - Jan Miller (0352) 714796.

Contact: 'Insight Into Industry', Tourism and Marketing Unit, Cheshire County Council, Commerce House, Hunter Street, Chester CH1 2QP Tel between 2-4pm (0244) 603128

## HERTFORDSHIRE

Our events listing for July and August includes a farm visit, badminton, a tree trail, Fort Knebworth, a treasure hunt etc - lots of fun for all ages. Subscription details : phone Glyn (0707) 335428. September Newsletter out soon.

## STAFFORDSHIRE

Come up and see us sometime! Joy, George, Rosie and Jake Atwood-Harris are holding 'Open House' on Sunday 22nd August. Any time after 11am. Bring a picnic.

We have 5 acres with goats, hens, cats and a pony so there's plenty to do and space to do it in. We thought we could go pond dipping in the Country Park at the bottom of the field.

We're hoping to meet some new people and welcome old friends. If there is enough interest, we could make it a regular date, run workshops etc - any ideas?

We live at Hurst Bank Farm, Troughstones, Biddulph Moor, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST8 7RT (very near the National Trust's Biddulph Grange Gardens). Phone us on (0782) 515679 for directions.

We may also be found at the City Museum in Hanley at various workshops through August (all sorts - paper workshop, drawing, minibeasts, 17th century costume, spiders, 'fossil' making, microscopes ...) so perhaps we could meet there. Phone us or the museum for details. Look forward to seeing you.

## WARWICKSHIRE

All are welcome for the following meetings:

August Picnic at Coombe Abbey. Contact Trish Archer, Tel

- (0203) 422575.  
 September Planning meeting and harvest activities. Please bring ideas and materials for both. Contact Sue Pountney Tel (0789) 731305.  
 October Visit to Batsford Arboretum. Contact Vivienne Bennett Tel (0608) 641354.

## LEICESTERSHIRE

- Wednesday 21st July  
 Snibston Discovery Park from 10am. Group rate arranged £2.25/£1.25. Bring a picnic. Contact Lucy Charlton (0533) 592118.  
 Sunday 1st August  
 Tree hunt at Burbage Woods. Meet at midday and bring a picnic. [I think I'm going to declare an official EO abbreviation for this: B.A.P. - Ed] Contact Christine and Peter Scarlett (0455) 209392.  
 Monday 9th August  
 Black Country Museum, Dudley. Each adult paying £4.95 can take in two children (5-17) for £1 each. Meet 10:30 inside the entrance or 1-1:30 at fairground. Contact Lucy (0533) 592118.  
 Thursday 12th August  
 Perseid Meteors (annual meteor shower). Should be clearly visible this year. 6pm at Keith and Lucy's. Bring binoculars/telescopes, food and drink to share. Contact Alan Balfe (0533) 376752.  
 Friday 20th August  
 Treak Cliff Cavern, Castleton. £2.40/£1. Meet at midday. To book, contact Peter Darling (0246) 239048.  
 Friday 27th August  
 Gym Session. 2-4pm. £1 per person. Contact Tracey Wood (0533) 897571.  
 Thursday 2nd September  
 Padley Gorge, Derbyshire. Meet at 11:30 B.A.P.  
 Wednesday 8th September  
 Swimming at Beaumont Leys from midday. EO discount.  
 Sunday 12th September  
 Steam and Craft Day, Museum of Technology, Leicestershire. Contact Pat Archer (0533) 543207.

Jewry Wall Museum talk/handling session, ¼ day activity based session. We are considering arranging these in the autumn. Cost will be £1-2.50 if there are enough people. If you are interested, contact Jill Fisher by 1st August on (0533) 701735.

## DERBYSHIRE

Sorry - no plans we can publish at present (too busy preparing a newsletter ...), but we usually meet every week. Telephone Kerry Meek for up to the minute details on (0332) 662596 or send an SAE for a diary sheet to her at 15 Meadow Close, Spondon, Derby DE21 7GS (note new address and telephone number).

## SUFFOLK

Meetings at Wetherden Village Hall start again on September 10th with a 'painting and making' theme (including 'art' face painting). 10:00-3:00. Cost £2 per family. Packed lunch. Ring Sarah Jones or Guthrie for details (phone number in the contact list).

## NORFOLK/CAMBRIDGESHIRE BORDER

Calling anyone within 20 miles of Downham Market - if you're interested in getting together for regular workshops, meetings, outings etc, phone Sarah Martin (0945) 772336

## WEST YORKSHIRE / LEEDS

I have arranged the use of our church building (a non-ecclesiastical type of building) for activity sessions on a Tuesday. So far we have met once a month. If the sessions are useful and supported we could meet more often. The next few dates are:

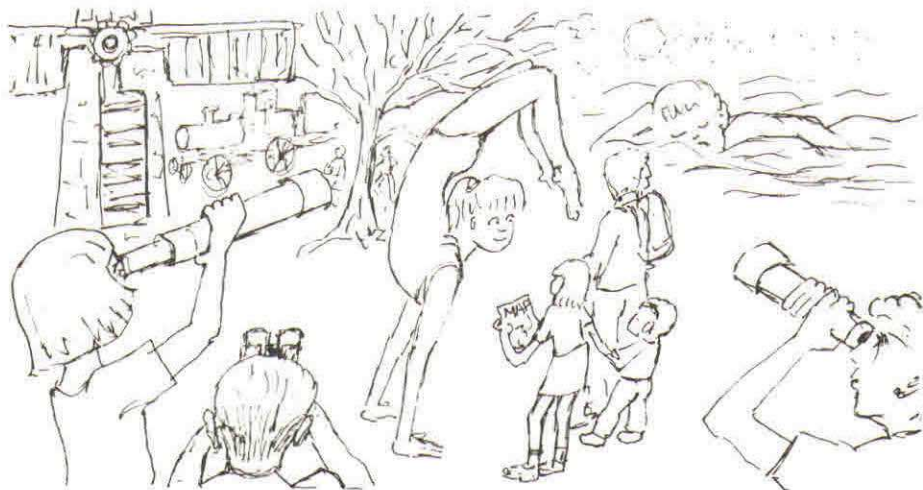
28th September, 19th October, 16th November, 7th December

This last date is a Christmas / craft session. We may find themes for the other sessions so please phone for details and directions. The church is just off the Otley Road and so easily accessible from many parts of Leeds and further afield. We meet from 10:30am fee 50p for a morning, £1 for a full day per family. In August I will have an open house on Tuesdays from 10:30am. Please phone me if you are coming to any of these sessions - it's nice to have an idea of numbers attending a little in advance!!

Kim Wark 21 Drummond Avenue, Leeds, LS16 5JZ Tel (0532) 757473

Tuesday 14th September: Parents' and Children's meeting at Sue and Bob Hart's, Huddersfield. Barbeque and games afternoon, plus meeting to discuss organisation and activities in W. Yorkshire. Bring a game - indoor or outdoor depending on the weather. Arrive anytime between 2-7pm. If you need directions or picking up from Huddersfield Railway or bus station, Tel Sue on (0484) 537865. directions.

NEW COORDINATORS The new coordinators for West Yorkshire are Diane Green and Martin Cowell, 36 Dirker Drive, Marsden, Huddersfield HD7 6AP Tel (0484) 846946.



## EO BUSINESS

The following items were agreed at Featherstone in May.

### **CONTACT WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

Situations arise when it is useful for a coordinator to be in contact with the Local Authority for their area. Coordinators who are not already known to the Authority are sometimes reluctant to do this part of the work.

If you are a coordinator who does not wish the Authority to know of your existence, please could you find another member in your area who is willing to take on this work.

### **ADVERTISING COORDINATORS' POSTS**

When a coordinator resigns, they often know someone else who they can recommend to take on the job. This is usually immensely helpful to everyone concerned. Up to now, such posts have not been advertised as vacant. In the interests of openness and equal opportunity for all, however, I shall put all counties whose coordinators are resigning in the newsletter, so that other people can offer themselves to fill the vacancy (see Situations Vacant).

Stephanie Fatcher, Coordinators' Secretary, 50 Springfield Avenue, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 1HL Tel (0246) 239048.

### **NATIONAL GATHERING IN THE SOUTH-EAST**

Gilwell Park in Chingford, London, has been booked for the Spring Gathering 1994, from March 17th-24th. A group of people is now needed to organise the gathering - the more the merrier! - and preferably from us southerners. For more details, please contact me: Eleanor Stapleton, 21 Central Avenue, Edmonton, London, N9 9RQ Tel 081-884-1368.



# GOVERNMENT FUNDING

by Susan Vaughan

I feel most strongly that it is time that Education Otherwise as an organisation addresses the issue of Government funding for home education.

The time may now be ripe, as the Government's emphasis is on 'parental choice'. Schools can 'opt out' and there is an identifiable amount of money allocated to each child.

I write as a single parent with one child. I have been precipitated into educating my child at home by his utter refusal to go to school any longer. My total weekly income, after my housing costs have been met, is £65. This has to cover food, clothing, gas, electricity, water rates, council rates, house maintenance, glasses for myself and my son (£100 1st year, in spite of vouchers) and my one luxury, the telephone. We cannot afford a television and even the purchase of a book makes a large hole in the budget, not to mention pens, paper, exercise books etc. I would accept all that EO says about my ability, ingenuity, creativity and lovingness in regard to seeing that my son gets the education he deserves but I would argue that there is no limit to this especially as he gets older and his educational requirements become more complex and therefore more expensive. I also hear that it doesn't cost much. Has any one ever quantified this? Surely it depends to some extent on your child's aptitude and ability. "Not much" is anyway a relative term, relative to one's income. I wonder how far Yehudi Menuhin would have got if his mum had been unable to pay for his music lessons.

As a matter of principle, it seemed to me that if my son has a right to an education suited to his aptitude and ability and I have a duty to provide this, then I and any other parent should be enabled to do this by the provision of money with which to do it. As I have contributed through my taxes when I was working to the education of other children, it seems unfair that my child should be denied his share of the finances.

There are very many people in this country both working and not working who are in a similar financial situation to myself. Government statistics (Households Below Average Income - A Statistical Analysis 1979 to 1988/89) reveals that "incomes after housing costs for the poorest tenth of the population fell in real terms by some 6% during this period, whilst rising by 30% for the average". Also "A growing proportion of society is living in poverty (defined as living on below 50% of average income after housing costs). In 1988/89 the numbers living in poverty amounted to 12 million (22% of the population), 3.1 million of this total are children (25% of all children in this country). "33% of the poorest 10% of children were living in unemployed families in 1988/89" - a rise from 15% in 1979.

Without proper funding, how can home education be seen as a viable alternative for the parents of these children? Or is EO going to say to them "Sorry, but this is only for those who can afford it."

The new competitive ethos between schools is leading to a huge rise in the numbers of children being excluded / expelled. In Gloucester the figures are 37 in 1989/90, 56 in 1990/91 and 95 in 1991/92. These figures do not take into account

the numbers of children excluded on a short term or indefinite basis. In the course of my conversation with the Education Information Officer I explained why I wanted this information (for this article). He said he thought it would be a good idea for the Government to fund education otherwise as it might go some way to resolve the difficulties and expense of educating these excluded children. Local authorities have to spend increasingly large amounts of money providing taxis or home tuition for these children. Here it would seem EO has something very positive to offer especially if it was funded properly.

There has been a massive cutback in the library service, a major resource for home educators. Fewer books are being bought, certainly fewer specialist books and the length of time it takes to receive a requested book is increasing. My library is staffed by an increasing number of volunteers of varying degrees of expertise. This downgrades the overall quality of the service. In turn this will affect the quality of the education offered at home, particularly for those of us who rely heavily on libraries for books and other resources.

If there was a proper source of funding, my son would know there was a specific amount of money just for his education needs. This would give him considerable freedom to ask for what he needs or to go out and get it for himself when he is a bit older. Too often his interests are curtailed by my lack of ability to pay for him. This leads to considerable frustration for both of us. Some children, knowing their parents are short of funds, may be reluctant to ask for what they need. If EO is truly to live up to its ideals, then both the freedom to ask together with a reasonable cer-

tainty that there is the money to fulfill the request, must be there in the children's minds.

The 1992/93 per capita allowances in Gloucestershire are as follows:

Infants	£1022.00
Juniors	£ 949.00
Lower Secondary	£1177.00
Upper Secondary	£1538.00
6th Form	£1982.00

These are not necessarily the final figures allocated to each school, as further additions can be made depending on the number of pupils. Even these amounts, however, would go a long way towards providing resources for children being educated "otherwise".

I accept that not all EO families would want to take up these monies should it ever become possible to do so, but I see no reason why take-up should be compulsory. If individuals have to produce accounts, so be it - I would be prepared to do so. Will people on benefit have difficulty with the DSS over this money? Probably, but maybe this would not be insurmountable if this matter was addressed at the outset of any negotiations with the authorities.

On the plus side, I can see many exciting possibilities opening up for Education Otherwise at both the organisational and the individual level. With money coming in from Government via individual members, EO could really establish itself in the minds, if not the hearts, of all the citizens of this country. Other things that we might achieve are: no need for bursaries for people to attend conferences; more money for publicity; money for research and development eg "how much does it cost to educate a child at home?, what are the results, where does this organisation want to be in the 21st century? etc; a

network of libraries - pools of equipment for hire - skills database?; parents pooling the money to set up mini schools; the ability to buy-in services from wherever.

If the Government could be persuaded to allocate funds to individual home educators, it would give us a seal of approval and go some way to pre-empt the less than helpful attitude of some local authorities. It would put a legitimate stamp of acceptability on the aims and aspirations of education otherwise and might start a revolution in the education of the children of this country. I hope that enough people will respond to this article through the pages of this newsletter to get a genuine debate going on this subject.

Susan Vaughan  
15 Parkend Road, Gloucester,  
GL1 5AN

STOP PRESS... NEWS FROM  
SUSSEX :-

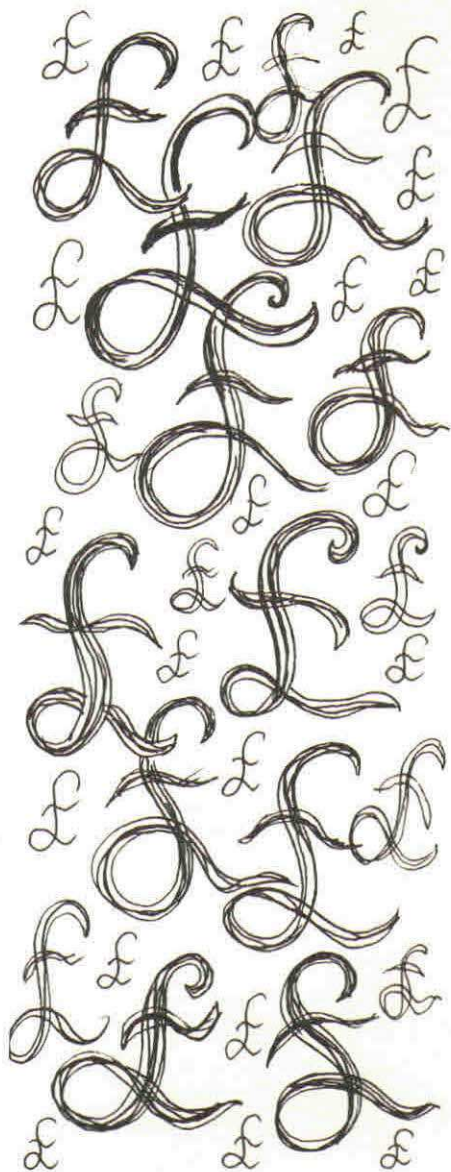
A group of older children (9+) have enjoyed working on plays written by themselves and staged in July.

From August they will probably be meeting weekly in Horsham.

We continue to have monthly "at home" days etc.

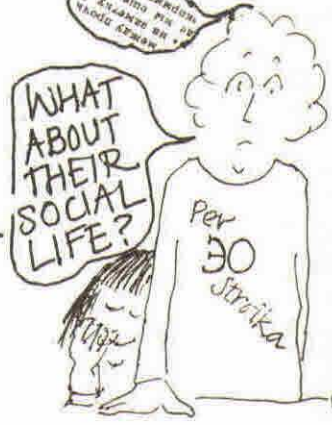
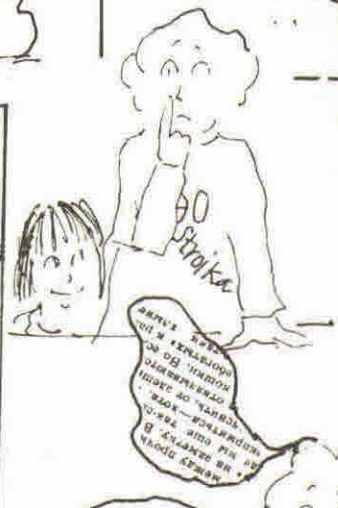
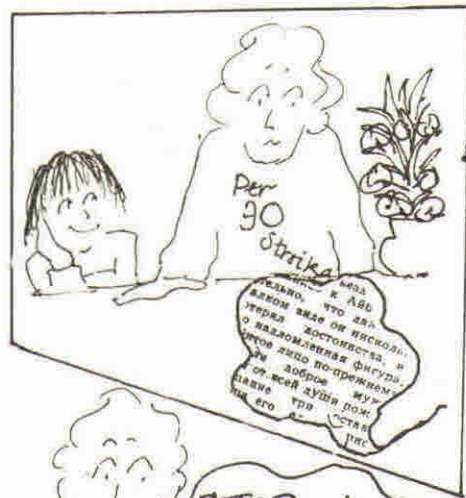
Anyone interested in a Maths Games Day?

Ring Isobel Boguski 0403-261178



MRS G and ARCHIE are in RUSSIA to promote 30 000

# EDUCATING ARCHIE BY SEG



СТАСИВО НИНА ЛЮБОВЬ НАТАША

VII/93

[SEG IS NOT ON HOLIDAY]

## SNIPPETS

### LOST!

Lost at Featherstone Castle recently; one pair of men's blue jeans. Any information leading to their whereabouts, please contact Matt or Pam Stevenson on the Lost Jeans Hotline - (0304) 210997. The lines are open now!

### LEARNING GROUP

As of September 15, 1993, Peggy Thomas will be taking a group of children for one day a week at the home of John and Holly Bush in Eltham, South London. The intention is to cover the National Curriculum in English, Maths, Science, History, and Geography. There are currently three children in the group: Raven Bush (7), Jenny Norris (8) and Caroline Norris (9). They're looking for three others and would especially welcome a boy or two to keep Raven company. Age must be 7 minimum and approx 11 maximum, although they will consider older children. Peggy will be paid by the parents, who will play quite a part in planning the curriculum, contributing resources etc. For more info contact Peggy Thomas, 7 Maybourne Close, Springfield Road, London SE26 6HQ Tel 081-659-5815.

### EO COMPUTER GUIDE

The Education Otherwise Computer Guide includes a 'Basics' section and advice on choosing a computer for use with your children as well as full and up-to-date educational price lists, listings of educational dealers and details of resources for Acorn and Apple computers. The guide costs £2.50 (cheques payable to Paul Bentley) and is available from: Paul Bentley, 83 Manor Park, London, SE13 5RA.

### WHO SPEAKS FRENCH?

We now have two editions of 'Instruction Familiale - Une

Enfance Sans Ecole', the magazine of the French counterpart to EO, Apprendre Autrement. Some of the articles could well be of value to newsletter readers, but they are of course rather inconveniently written in French. Any volunteers to read and translate anything suitable? - I shall pass them on to the next newsletter editor - Ed.

### STANDARD ENGLISH?

I see from the newspaper (June 8) that in the instructions to Stage Three examinees, there is no need to "write in complete sentences". Frankly I find this. Standards of spoken and even English have evidently dropped in recent. Hardly.

It is clear from his pigheaded behaviour that John Patten is a. I am now seriously concerned about the standards he is promoting in our. Something must be. And.

- Letter from Tim Pigott-Smith in the Guardian, 11th June 1993.

### CURRICULUM OTHERWISE

1. The art of doing nothing.
2. How to talk to people.
3. Listening.
4. Happiness.
5. Motivation.
6. Love.
7. Agriculture.
8. How the world works.
9. Laughter.
10. How to make the world more beautiful.
11. Lateral thinking.
12. Meditation.

- supplied by Fiona Chaff, Stourl, Lochend, North Roe, Shetland ZE2 9RZ Tel 08063 215.

### BOOKS

Browsers Bookshop, Allendale Road, Leicester. Jo Pickering has arranged a 12½% discount on all books bought by EO members.

Red House Books - we get 1 free book for every 10 ordered. If you want to be sent catalogues or to order via EO, contact Lucy Charlton (0533) 592118.

Ex Leics coordinator Malcolm Hornsby has just opened the Fennel St Book Attic in Loughborough (second hand books). Open Thursdays, Fridays (late night) and Saturdays. Tel (0509) 269860.

Tracey Wood is compiling EO orders from ESPO (educational Supplies). Contact her on (0533) 897571.

## WANTED

Does anybody have a good reading scheme for sale second hand ie Oxford Reading Tree preferably, or Ginn or 'New Way'? Please contact Kim Elliott, 14 Malia Road, Tapton, Chesterfield, Derbyshire Tel (0246) 220198

## NEW SCHOOL, POOLE

The New School was launched just under two years ago by a small group of people committed to creating a viable alternative to main stream education. Some pupils have joined on a flexi-schooling scheme which is ideal for children who are basically home educated, and wish to participate in lessons or activities with the school for part of the week. They are on the look out for teachers or people with skills who would like to join in activities from September 1993. Their children would also be welcome. Telephone Barbara Holden on (0202) 742315 (evenings), or write to: The New School, Parkstone B&G Club, Recreation Road, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset BH12 3EA.



# NEW LITERATURES

By Christopher R. Shute

I hesitate before writing about computer games, because David Deutsch has already done so with enviable clarity and the response from readers suggests to me that this is a subject about which many minds are already made up. I don't say that the 'antis' are prejudiced, at least not in the sense that racists or misogynists are prejudiced. Prejudice usually comes from a complex of emotions set up in childhood and not adequately resolved. Suspicion of computer games probably has more to do with the fully formed emotions of adults.

Even home educators, who tend to be more broad-minded than the average parent, are not immune to the great tide of influences which form our attitudes to children. In the front of all our minds is the thought that we, the parents, have both the responsibility and the power to determine what we shall allow to influence our children. They are, after all, the only people most of us will have any real power over in all our lives. They offer us a chance to pay out through them any life script which appeals to our deepest sense of what is good and worthwhile in the universe. They arouse in us at the same moment intense love and deep suspicion, joy and a paralysing sense of danger. They enchant us but we know that if we do not do certain unpleasant things to 'train' them, they will be 'spoilt', and society will blame us for ever more.

To avoid failing in this respect, we turn to the one place where we assume that we can find

reliable guidelines about rearing children, our own memories. These lead us to think that the only things worth studying are those which tax the mind with established canons of learning. Multiplication tables, dates of kings, irregular verbs, hard spellings and so forth are easy for us to impose on our children, and the very boredom which they engender assures us that they are doing what we need them to do - bringing the next generation under the same yoke as we carry.

## FEAR AND ANXIETY

This is why computer games leave us nonplussed and anxious. They tie up with nothing in our adult experience, and we fear the excitement they give children. We cannot accept them as 'educational' because the schools do not endorse them. Children like them and spend vast amount of time playing them, which intensifies our concern lest the youngsters be wooed away from all the things we want to see them concentrating on. Our culture does not allow us to step back and say to ourselves that they are enjoying themselves with their computers and that is reason enough to let them carry on. We feel compelled to restrict the use of their games machines or, if all else fails, confiscate the offending articles.

All of this has been said before. I want to go on to the next stage of the argument and suggest that some day soon we shall have no choice but to examine computer games with the same critical concern as we now apply to literature.

## FANTASY

In the last ten years I have seen computer games grow from the technical equivalent of quill pens to electric typewriters. Nowadays we can use them to give substance to our most colourful fantasies. We can

build exciting and complex universes peopled by characters which can move in an ever-increasing variety of ways. We no longer have to trim our programming to fit the limitations of processing speed and screen memory, limitations which were responsible for the brain-numbing banality of early games, such as 'Space Invaders'. An ordinary game program can now have a dozen things happening on the screen at more or less the same moment without visible interruption, in a breathtaking palette of vivid colours.

### ARTISTIC VALUES

All this need not necessarily incline us to be less critical of computer games. On the other hand, it ought to suggest to us that in the hands of a sensitive, creative person, they could become the vehicle for whatever we think are the values of high art. After all, every other mode of human expression has produced its share of great works. I see no reason why computer games should be any different from, say, painting or sculpture which exist in every form from the most debased to the highest and most noble.

I accept that in saying this, I am treading on perilous ground. Many readers will object that however sophisticated computer games may become, they will always be essentially trivial. I would defend myself by saying that most art was, and is, trivial if by trivial you mean 'created to amuse and divert'. It is worth remembering that the plays, poetry and novels which children struggle with at school were not written under the orders of the people who drew up the National Curriculum, but rather to get their authors enough money to live on. Even the plays of Shakespeare had no higher purpose than diverting the groundlings at the Globe. We have come to see the depth of human truth which they embody,

but they were written first of all for apprentice tailors and jobbing carpenters, dissipated minor nobles and whoever else had the price of a ticket. here is no doubt that the greatness of Shakespeare and others like him was acknowledged in their own time, but I suspect that few who lived then would have been able to perceive the value which succeeding generations have given to works which are now honoured throughout the world.

One day the same may be said of some computer games. They will be judged by different criteria to Shakespeare, but I think that it is entirely possible that a proportion will come to be recognised as having enduring imaginative depth, wit and graphic richness sufficient to merit the title 'classic'. It may be that the prejudice which still colours our view of anything for which our children show a wholehearted enthusiasm prevents us from appreciating computer games in any other way than trivial toys. Nevertheless I should like to hope that some of us will be able to look at them more dispassionately.

We might for instance, look at the choice of elements in game play. early games used a limited repertoire of formulaic challenges. You commanded a single character made up of a half-dozen body positions which could walk, run, jump, crouch and shoot. You moved it in a given direction and either overcame or avoided enemies or obstacles on the way to a goal. In some cases, you had to keep out of trouble by jumping from platform to platform, timing your moves to elude enemy characters. There wasn't an awful lot to it, partly because processor speeds were slow and programmers were limited in the number of movements which could happen simultaneously on the screen. Even then there were games which gripped me for hours at a time,

## SPANNING THE AGES

This supplement is made up of my own 'trials', the experiences of those that have written and past articles from 'Growing Without Schooling'.

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In writing this supplement it has been difficult at times not to stray into the debate on formal or informal education. So much of how you cope with the different age groups depends on your approach to education in the first place.

As Kim Wark says ".....most people are delightfully vague ...." when you try to find out HOW home education actually works in practice.

This was a good time for me to address this question. I have, at the moment, one child of Secondary age; one Junior (I have lost touch with this Year 1 etc.!!); one Reception age; one of playgroup age and one baby. Suddenly they are all using different learning styles: the 3 year old wants playdough and to play cars; the 5 year old wants to learn to read; the 9 year old wants projects and 'real-life' learning (no textbooks) and the 11 year old wants constant challenging. How to marry that lot up and stay sane is the big question.

Initially I had one five year old, a four year old and a baby when I first took Adrian out of school. Life was simple then. 'Spanning the ages' was not too difficult - or maybe time has allowed me to view the past through rose-tinted spectacles! Like many families new to EOing, I followed a fairly rigid timetable. We had set times for particular subjects, I had few outside interests/commitments and we only knew people in the village where we lived. Education, in the academic sense, could be slotted in easily during the day. Add the fact that the two boys are close in age - NO PROBLEM!

As time has gone on we have added two children, friends miles away, interests (snooker, drama, Latin, Scouts to name a few), part-time work for me etc. Meeting differing needs in the time available has to be my biggest problem.

We have looked at it all ways. The following is a mixture of several people's methods and experiences to save repetition.

### TAKE 1

All work done on an individual basis. No attempt made to integrate activities. This gave each one their own special times with me but fell at the first hurdle - the demands of potty-training! To actually have enough hours in the day I needed some activities to be inter-linked.

### TAKE 2

Project-based learning - same task different levels. This had

the disadvantage that the younger one leaned on the older one rather than doing his own thinking. We modified this to some extent by putting together a complete package with each child doing something towards the whole. The competition between them meant that each did more and the younger child(ren) learnt from the older child(ren). Also the younger children get involved with more complex things because they see the older children doing them. This system had lots of advantages for the younger children but not so much so for the older. It has come to a natural end as the boys have got older and maybe it will be resurrected as the little ones get older.

#### TAKE 3

Attempt to use skills with younger siblings, e.g. reading stories to the little ones. Science experiments etc. slotted in when all is calm. This demanded a lot from the younger ones as older siblings get rather upset when the game etc. that they have so lovingly constructed is thrown aside and pronounced "boring"!

#### TAKE 4

Probably where we are at at the moment - a mix of all the above. Each child has a list of tasks (both academic and other) for the week. Each day they have things on the academic front that must be completed e.g. spellings. They then have activities under various subject headings that should be done before the end of the week. Finally there are the general tasks that need doing e.g. baking cakes to sell for their rainforest fund, sewing on Scout badges etc.

So far this has allowed for flexibility. If I am busy with the baby then they can get on with something else while waiting for me to help them. If the three year old wants a game of hide and seek then they can juggle their commitments to accommodate him. It enables me to at least minimise the preparation and gives them some choice. Planning is everything to me. The baby does not sleep during the day (very much) and so a great deal of help is required from the older children to prepare and clear activities for the little ones. This ultimately gives them their own time with me. We tend to work as a team otherwise I would spend all my time with the Under 5's. As they get older they have to take responsibility for, for example: getting the lunch ready which frees me up to give one child individual attention.

Maybe one of the main ways I have found to cope with differing ages and stages is to have no set times for anything. We do not have school days and holidays. Any day any time can be Maths time. This caused enormous problems in the early days when they were just out of school. They would not 'work' if the local school was not open but over the years they have found that such a narrow approach to 'education' worked as much to their disadvantage as to their advantage.

I try to marry up places with activities. For example: in the kitchen:- the two eldest may be doing separate science experiments; the five year old cooking with me; the three year

old playing with playdough and the baby, well doing what babies do - a different activity/place every two minutes!

We have perfected the art of mobile activities for the car. We spend a lot of time taking the older ones to their activities and this makes sure the rest don't resent all the ferrying around. General knowledge quizzes, lengthening the sentence with adjectives, story telling round robin, long involved maths questions - you name it we've tried it!! It is easy to tailor such activities to each age group and they enjoy them.

Sheer coping with five children let alone their different ages and stages has meant that sorting activities are done with the washing and story writing might be to write and illustrate a book for the five year old to read to her three year old brother (with consultation with each other as to what sort of story). The older children have a need to be self motivated and utilize their time - the coping then becomes easier. I can already see this coming through although I do worry that the eldest does not always stretch himself (but that is a different issue).

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It seems the general plan that hard, academic-type work takes place in the morning.

"...We still have no real routine, beyond working as hard as possible in the morning, especially if Miriam sleeps for a while (which she doesn't always deign to do!)

My one successful activity is playing shops. We have a food shop on the kitchen table, and a toy shop upstairs in the boys' room. We have a money pot with various coins and price labels. We take it in turns to be shopkeeper and buyers. The toyshop takes cheques and swipe cards as well as cash. Even an end of the shopping week cupboard offers us a reasonable variety of goods to sell. Samuel (8) has organised a 50% off sale and had to work out the new prices himself. Matthew (6) is getting quite good at paying for items up to 50p with 10p and 1p coins; we are working on 20p and 5p coins too.

Kim Wark

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Working individually with each child. This has to be the answer in theory but very difficult to put into practice. But there again your children may be close enough in age and interests to work together?

"...Otherwise I tend to work individually with the boys. I have realised, too, that sometimes Matthew will come up while I'm doing something with Samuel - maybe reading him a story. If he is interested he will stay; if not he will find something else to do. This can also work the other way round. So while I say I tend to work individually with them, there is some overlap with

stories I read out loud, painting and craft work and TV programmes (and computer programmes - educational and others!). Cooking also involves both the boys. They can both organise food for themselves or each other if I'm busy with Miriam or not well.

Kim Wark

Claire has three boys aged 5, 3 years and 8 months. She says... "There are days when nothing succeeds at home, baby screaming, boys squabbling, and we abandon all inside plans and head for a park, swimming pool or friend's house. On those days survival is the name of the game not profound self-motivated learning experiences!

There is a lot we do together. The two older boys play so well together most of the time. We enjoy a lot of card and board games, reading, a phonics course (the three year old is much further forward than the five year old was at that age). While the five year old does his Maths worksheets the three year old enjoys his junior puzzle books on colour, shape etc.

'Siblings Without Rivalry' (Faber and Mazlish) freed me from any guilt over treating them differently and, mostly, stopped me comparing them. So on several occasions, I've done something specifically with one child, for example: cake baking with the three year old. The five year old used to enjoy this, but has recently been less enthusiastic and I see this as no reason for the three year old to miss out. They did object initially to being separated, but can both play well by themselves so the grunbling doesn't last for long."

Helene Finlayson has three children; 5, 3 years and 10months. Her key is flexibility.

"... One thing I have learned is to be flexible. When the baby is having a nap, or the 3 year old is at playgroup I do things with the 5 year old that would be a struggle with the little ones around.

I used to ask my 3 year old what he wanted to do first, then set him up with paints or playdoh or puzzles, before beginning "school", but he soon realized he was being fobbed off and I eventually realized that working with him was as important as working with his older brother.

So now we do things together if it is suitable. Adam (5) reads spelling words while John (3) reads names of family members if he wants to do "the same". Or I will set Adam to working and do something else with John. Quite often John will play happily nearby and later amazes us with how much he has picked up. They both love to do science experiments together; also music, literature, geography, French, PE and baking are all conducive to group work. Even practical maths, like weighing and measuring, counting and adding etc. can be quite fun for all ages and everyone learns something. For example: the 3 year old counts to 9; the 5 year old adds  $3+3$  or  $6+3$  and a 7 year old could see the multiplication in it

I realize this sounds easier than it is, but there will always be difficulties. The main thing is that you are spending time with your children. Just do the best you can."

Many of the games suggested by Jan Miller in the last N/L (Issue 93) can be adapted for use with different age groups playing together. For example: Bingo. Jan Miller says ".....I made a card for the older child with numbers from 5 - 30 and numbers from 0 - 10 for the younger child. (I made sure I made each card in their respective favourite colours so they would want the appropriate ones!) It takes a bit of thinking out to make up games that both can do, but it is really satisfying when it works - you do feel it is all worthwhile after all!

And the glow you get when one calls the other over excitedly to look at a newly discovered pond creature, or when they share a joke, or when you all enjoy a hands-on museum together or snuggle in bed together with a good book at night - well, there is nothing more rewarding, in my experience; and certainly you do all get more out of it than with a single child - in the end."

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'Using' the younger child to get more out of an older child is a strategy employed occasionally by Jan Miller

"I have been doing flash cards with the younger child - making sure I slip in a couple of words that the older child is not sure about reading as well; and the older child likes to take a turn at 'teaching' the little one - and you know the best way to learn something is to try and teach it to someone else!"

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Can older children be involved to give you time with individuals?

Laura Ochart 'Growing Without Schooling' 81 .....  
What I have found to be the best solution for most days is to have one of the boys play with her while I work with the other, then they switch, usually several times. This gives me time to work with them individually, which is one reason that we're doing this whole thing. It also gives the boys a break in their studies, and teaches them about caring for little one, - part of family life, in our house at least. ....

Mainly, we just have to be flexible and keep in mind that we are doing the right thing, for our family, by homeschooling ..... Don't sweat about the small stuff. It all gets done eventually. I believe that my sons are learning things, like how to be part of a family and how to be good fathers, that are maybe more important than how to construct a sentence.

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## Coping with a toddler and a much older child brings its own problems

"...The main drawback with having a very young one at the same time as an older child learning at home is that the little one will "sabotage" anything "formal" or "crafty". We got round this partly, by only attempting such activities while the little one was asleep - which led to longer midday naps, which led to later nights, etc! But you make your own choices...."

Once you have completed your activity while the baby is asleep you then need a room or high shelf to put those precious constructions and projects away!

Jan Miller

Lyn Milum 'Growing Without Schooling' 80 writes:  
"I have a 10 year old daughter, Arwen and a 2 year old son, Michael.... I'm always looking for new creative distractions for Michael so we can concentrate on other things. Some ideas I use are: rotate some toys so they seem new every few months: put some plastic containers in the dishwasher that the baby can load and unload: put a sheet over a table to make a cave: let the baby play with pouring cups and toys (with supervision): give the baby a big box to colour with crayons that he can hide in...."

Toddlers are extremely sensitive and reflect their emotional environment. If they experience frustration or resentment towards them, they understandably rebel, loudly demanding the love, patience, and acceptance they need..... Include them as far as possible.....

We use a babysitter once in a while. Sometimes Arwen and I save a project until my husband, John, comes home so Michael can be occupied with his dad. An hour of minimally interrupted time in the evening can be very satisfying.

Set realistic goals. Find some special things you want to share with each child, and arrange to do it. Focus on what you are able to do and enjoy it, don't focus on what is too difficult to do right now. Don't let yourself burn out. Delegate lots of school and family responsibilities to your children. Arwen does one official home chore a day, plus takes over playing with Michael for at least an hour a day. When I get time to nourish myself, I then feel I can truly nourish my family."

Katharine Houk 'Growing Without Schooling' 74 also writes about coping with toddlers.

"..Just when Tahra (15) would be off at a music or art lesson and I would sit down to do a project with Benjamin (5) and Emily (3) would need me, or want to do exactly what Ben was doing, which was beyond her capability. I felt like a poorly trained juggler, and wondered if I could ever stick with it.

Whenever it was possible, I tried to let the little one actually take part in whatever was going on. This meant tailoring the activity to a 3 year old level, but if it could somehow be done, I found that this was the best solution. If we were using Cuisenaire rods, I would separate some for Emily to play with. If the activity was totally beyond my little one, I would set up another activity for her to engage in nearby. It is impossible to concentrate on what you are doing with your older child if your younger one is out of sight and it is "too quiet".

Sometimes just taking five or ten minutes to give your toddler a good dose of attention will work wonders. It helps with that "I'm left out" feeling. The trick is to sense early when it is needed, before emotions get out of control.

In my situation, anticipating was a big part of coping: having those extra toys and activities handy for Emily, knowing I would use her nap time for Ben, as opposed to mopping the kitchen floor at that time.

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Maybe you are lucky enough to live close to other EOers with children of similar ages. This can definitely ease the situation at times.

"The other great help has been a home-educating family with a five year old and a two year old. We have got together with separate planned activities for the older and younger ones. One adult takes the 5 and 5 1/2 year old, the other entertains the 3 and 2 year old in the garden or reading or playing with cars or such like. The older two do crafts or more complicated board and card games or such like."

Claire

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What about Dad (or Mum), Granny etc.?

"The older boys play dominoes and logic games with Dad before bed time, while the 3 year old enjoys a bed bouncing session with the baby. If the 5 year old is not too tired he may sometimes get an extra 30 minutes of reading after the 3 year old is in bed. We then cover books the 3 year old doesn't enjoy - Ginn History and larger fiction.

Life with a baby seemed to be one of the most difficult situations to cope with. I would vouch for that as I sit here trying to type a coherent supplement with a baby on my lap! Jan Miller feels that "...sleep deprivation is a much underestimated strain on family life..." that affects our ability to cope with the differing demands made by our children. Her answer

is to take it in turns with her husband to get away and have a complete break for a couple of hours or so.

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Finally .... if life is tough at the moment and nothing in this supplement is appropriate to your situation.... things do change CONSTANTLY! What constitutes a crisis in your EO life today will be gone by tomorrow.

"... Things change so constantly. Our baby sleeps twice daily at present, which is when we read and do the phonics course. He, the baby, is determinedly heading for walking and that will no doubt change our lives as will stopping sleeps when it happens. The older boys do not, at present, play in the sandpit. It is one place where their age difference is causing great arguments but they will play side by side with Lego or clay for hours. This may change in a few months again."

Claire

My children have got used to working anywhere - on the floor, in the bedroom, even half way up the stairs. Sometimes I find myself supporting the baby in a sitting position on the floor while she plays with her toys; reading a story to one; taking turns with a home-made game with the others and wondering just what I can put on my CV!!

Maybe the last word should go to Claire who says "..... It is not as difficult as I thought it would be."

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As a follow-on from this Supplement maybe it would be interesting to hear from those being home-educated. What do you feel about having siblings around all the time? Does it interfere with what you want to do? Are there benefits/disadvantages? What works for you? If you are the eldest do your parents expect too much? (A gripe close to home!) etc.

but I would accept that the greater part of those early games were fairly trivial.

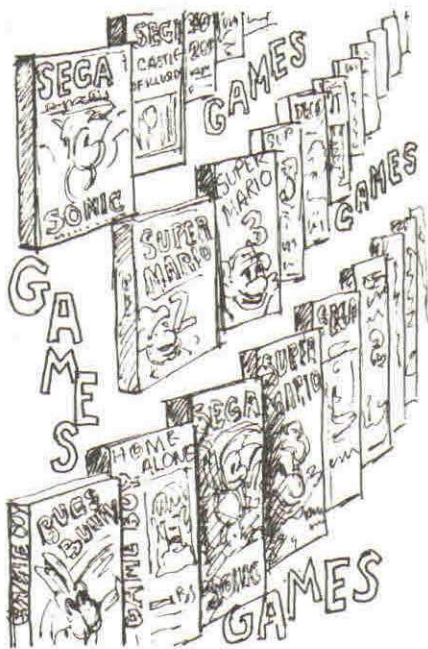
Since those early years, however, conceptual artists of considerable skill have come into computing and used it to create vast new environments for interactive play. Some of them are so complex and esquire from the player such depth of insight and planning that they can take many weeks to play through. The graphics side of these games has improved in the same measure. Nowadays it is possible to use colours with thousands of shades. As a result screen displays have become detailed works of art, often very beautiful in themselves. By using modern computer games I think it is at least possible that children will begin to appreciate the forms of art and natural beauty which resonate with those games.

### STRATEGY GAMES

By the same token, I think it is at least possible children will benefit intellectually from the kind of strategic thinking which modern programmers are able to build into their games. I have seen some extremely impressive games recently which required the player to plan for instance, a whole city, disposing the houses, the railway stations, the shops and offices and the leisure facilities in such a way that the 'people' who would live in it would be able to live their lives conveniently. Others of a similar kind make the outcome of the game depend on the players' ability to control a number of villages and towns in a 'country', meeting the needs of the 'inhabitants' and balancing their interests so that they can hold off 'enemies' and expand their own territory. One could, of course, dispute the moral messages which certain games send out. I would, for instance, quarrel with the easy assumption that war and invasion are morally neutral acts which

can easily form part of a game scenario. Nonetheless, the quality of large-scale thinking which many modern games demand is one good motive for encouraging children to play them and for bringing them under the same critical view as all other forms of art.

I am conscious that I have not developed this argument in enough detail. It is a large question and one which this generation will probably not resolve to its own satisfaction. The main point, however, is fairly simple: since we do not know how future generations will regard computer games we should be suspicious of anyone who feels compelled to classify them rigidly. At the same time we should be concerned to develop reasonable criteria for appreciating them so that in due course we can enable children to choose games for better reasons than that 'everyone is playing them'.



*I've been living with an unknown want,  
a need, a dream, a vision,  
of freedom, joy and gladness.  
Freedom just to run and stretch  
to grow without restrictions.  
Restrictions of a cold hard system,  
judging with narrow eyes and minds.  
Watching minds grow distorted  
in our self made cramped confined spaces.  
But there's an entrance to a better place,  
a small chink in the wall,  
but large enough to squeeze through  
if we have the will.  
A place with fresh clean air to breathe.  
Space to run and stretch and play.  
Colours vivid, not dulled by fog or fear.  
Freedom! Please don't turn this into  
something we've already left, because  
if I'd have wanted pressure groups and politics  
I'd have stayed just where I was.*

Frances Inglis

32 Farr Avenue, Thames View, Barking, Essex IG11 0NZ 081-591-2534

# THE CHILD'S VIEW OF THE WORLD

Kolya Wolf

We know much and understand little. The difference between what one merely knows and what one understands is not easy to spot, but it makes all the difference to the kind of person one is. What one merely knows, one knows like a book: one can look it up, answer questions on it, recite from it, even teach others merely to know it. But one cannot think with it or, most especially, be creative with it; for thinking and creativity require understanding. Knowledge is cheap, commonplace and objective. By contrast, understanding is hard to come by, rare and wholly subjective. Being subjective, understanding can only be built from within. That means, for example, that it cannot be taught. Not by teachers, not by parents, not by books, not by doing projects, not by bribery, and not by coercion.

Imagine that you are standing outside Hampton Court Maze, calling out advice to a friend who is lost inside. However well you know the maze, most of your advice will be useless, not to say downright confusing, unless you know where exactly your friend is. But there is no easy way of finding that out from outside. If you are to be of help you must first find your friend by entering the maze, even at the risk of becoming lost yourself. Of course, calling this 'becoming lost' is only one way of looking at it. When you find your friend, you may discover that she is having the time of her life and is quite uninterested in being shown the way out.

And so it is with developing one's understanding. Each one of us inhabits a private maze of ideas, facts, pictures, sensations

and connections, which other people can only learn about at second hand. At most, people may succeed in gaining a partial understanding of each other's world-views. But that bridge of comprehension can only be built by open-minded, two-way exploration of each other's mind-sets. Constructing such a bridge is intellectually so challenging that it can only be sustained by intrinsic motivation. Only if you and the other person, say your child, genuinely want to understand each other, can the connection be established.

But even where the right motivation exists, on both sides, it is easy to be diverted. The parent is always liable to try to coax the child into drawing the 'right' conclusion (like heading for the exit of the maze), and the child is always susceptible to buying off such parental pressures by telling the parent what he wants to hear. These tendencies are ubiquitous and inevitable. If not checked, as they usually are not, they result in the child knowing what the parents want her to know, and understanding none of it. Actually the outcome is often worse than that, because acquiring knowledge without understanding is such a contrived and torturous task, that children tend to balk at the prospect. Consequently, they often end up neither understanding nor knowing, unable to think or to learn in the area in question. That is the origin of so called 'learning disorders'.

This brings us to a key realisation. *Those who would nurture the growth of understanding in another, must do so through the perceptions of the intended beneficiary.* Anything else is liable to contaminate and eventually pervert beyond redemption

the structure of the learner's understanding. That, incidentally, is the real reason why school is wrong — its methods and ethos are inimical to the growth of understanding. By the same token, home-educating families who institute a rigid form of instruction are also wrong. Worst of all are home-educating families who strive for a more rigid curriculum than that of schools. The proper goal of home education is not to inculcate a fixed body of knowledge, but to facilitate the growth of understanding, for understanding is the precursor of creativity, and creativity is the foundation of happiness.

But given how hard it is to enter into another person's frame of mind, what can parents do to nurture their children's understanding? The short answer is to take their cue from the child. For although the child does not necessarily know what and how she understands, she instinctively knows what to do to widen and deepen her understanding. She is aware of puzzles, gaps, inconsistencies, and other flaws in her comprehension, and, unless put off, constantly seeks to remedy them. Far from being undesirable, each such flaw is an opportunity for extending her understanding. We might picture the situation in terms of doors and keys. Each flaw in the child's understanding is a door leading to greater understanding, and each idea or insight that resolves a flaw is a key that unlocks one of the doors.

Thus anything that exposes more doors or reveals more keys is beneficial to the child. But not any old puzzle is a door, nor any old explanation a key. Only if they seem that way to the child, do they qualify. So tell the child about the things you think will engage her interest, play with her, buy her toys, read her books, expose her to the complexities and wonders of the real world, let her share in what you are doing, and, above all else, talk with her as

much as possible. But always be ready to stop and change the activity or subject under discussion in the blink of an eye. Don't think that just because you have not finished explaining how bread is made or why the Sun is yellow, your efforts have been wasted. Don't worry if the child appears to lose interest before she has got her facts straight. Most particularly, don't ever tell her that it is a virtue to finish what she has started. That is the wisdom of the captain of the Titanic, who held his course despite the weather forecast predicting the presence of icebergs. Lastly, don't judge the child's level of understanding. You don't know what role any particular piece of knowledge plays in her scheme of things, and thus you are in no position to pass judgement on how she is doing. Always remember that your role is secondary. You can make suggestions and offer advice. You can be a friend and a partner. You can be a facilitator, a sounding board and an audience. But you must not be the conductor. That role is exclusively the child's.

So if you want to help your child enrich her understanding and enhance her creativity then forget about coaxing her towards the facts as you see them. Instead, cast yourself as her apprentice—for she knows much better than you what needs to be learnt next—and, as her apprentice, help her engage with the world through her own eyes. Doing otherwise will just create a dull imitation of your own mind.

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*Kolya Wolf writes regularly for **Taking Children Seriously** (see ad. elsewhere in this newsletter or telephone Sarah on 081 808 3200 for further details).*

# NEWSLETTER REVIEW

At the last EO General Meeting, the problem of space in the Newsletter was raised. It was agreed to evaluate the sections properly and an analysis has been prepared by Kate Freeman, working with Sandie Cottee, Lynne Greenhough and Emma Planterose. The draft report is very briefly summarised here.

Thirteen EO Newsletters were analysed, from February 1991 to February 1993. A detailed table of the ratio of page spaces to subject categories was produced. Top of the list by area came features and legal articles, followed by the regional diary/news. Bottom came the 'nuts and bolts' (ie 'How To' and 'What to Do').

## RECOMMENDATIONS

If these are adopted, they will ensure that the newsletter better meets people's needs; this will encourage them to renew their subscriptions!

**Contents list** - should be well displayed.

**Articles** over 3 pages / 700 words are too long. The editor should have discretion to shorten them.

**Letters** - guidelines for the editor should request a balance of opinions.

**EO Business** - separate this into a pull-out supplement to make space for more material in the main body. Subject matter that is currently treated as supplements could be dealt with as special features within the main text, prepared by sub-editors.

**Adverts** - A lively bartering corner is needed for those home educators who are working on a shoestring. A column format is

preferable into which an advertising sub-editor can prepare the ads consistently using DTP. A fairer charging method: members offers / wants to be free; commercial ads charged properly.

**Nut and Bolts** - (eg Hints & Tips, DIY, recipes). Something the reader can try out immediately. Can be accumulated and passed from one editor to the next to be used as filler, since it does not date.

**Special Needs** - (which could include dyslexia, phobia, giftedness). Little and often is preferable to a special every six months.

**EO Yearbook** - Relatively static information should be taken out of the newsletter and added to the contact list to produce a new EO Yearbook. Other contents would be a run down on the organisation, who's who in EO, other useful contacts, resources for distance learning, an annual Newsletter index and the newsletter guidelines.

**Overall** - a predetermined balanced page weighting for different sections is recommended. This will require editors to canvas for articles under the various headings, especially 'Nuts and Bolts'.

## THE WAY FORWARDS

Feedback on these proposals have been positive so far, but volunteers are needed to implement them. A small Newsletter working group should be set up to agree guidelines annually. Kate Freeman is willing to be part of such a team. Contact her at Wayside Farm, Etchilhampton, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 3JT  
Tel (0380) 860470.

[I think I adopted some of these suggestions intuitively for this newsletter, but perhaps the next issue can be the real 'trial run' - Ed.]

# ADVERTISEMENTS

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ton 218.

## NEW SERVICE

Top award winning publishers, Dorling Kindersley have recently launched their new Family Library service - giving you the opportunity to purchase their entire range of over 400 books and videos without setting foot outside your front door. You will have access to many titles well in advance of their general release and, from time to time, may take advantage of special offers. Some titles are exclusive to the Family Library, and will not be available in the shops. This includes PICTUREPEDIA, a beautiful series of reference books for children aged between 5 to 8 years old. If you would like a free catalogue of Dorling Kindersley's latest titles, plus further information, please ring Jill Brooks on (0883) 347914, or write to Jill at 215, Coulsdon Road, Caterham, Surrey CR3 5NW

### **Taking Children Seriously**

Forthcoming issues of this non-profit-making magazine will address:

- *Is society a family writ large?* An ambitious and brilliant article by Kolya Wolf and Dr David Deutsch.
- Dr Lewis Perelman on the ideas in his controversial new book, *School's Out*, subtitled *hyperlearning, the new technology and the end of education*.
- Mental shortcuts and creativity: why "cheating" is an indication of intelligence rather than laziness.
- Only one chance: how to cope with the fear of making mistakes.

Regular columns include:

- free and low-cost educational resources
- book reviews
- computer corner including educational software reviews

Subscription rates: £5 (for 3 issues), £9 (for 6 issues) or £11 (for 9 issues). For the *London supplement*, which lists get-togethers and educational visits for home educators in London, please add 50p, £1, or £1.50 respectively. To subscribe, please send a cheque payable to 'Taking Children Seriously' to 23 Whitley Road, London N17 6RJ. (Tel. 081 808 3200)

# LETTERS

## *from Tricia-Ann Day . . .*

I am writing concerning the home-educating of emotionally disturbed children. My son, Gavin, was severely traumatised by his school experiences due to his being bullied. I was relieved when he was excluded from school as we both saw it as a rescue from an intolerable situation.

Four years on, with Gavin coming up to secondary school age, I decided it might be worthwhile asking the LEA what they had on offer for him. Gavin was assessed by the Department and I was told that he is dyslexic, something I have been telling the LEA all this time. I am now being told that due to Gavin being denied access to school he is too socially stunted to attend mainstream secondary and he'll be offered some form of education for disturbed children. As usual it seems that it's 'all my fault' that he has problems.

The LEA provided a home tutor who teaches Gavin for one hour daily. The home tutor says that she feels Gavin will not cope in school due to his unco-operative behaviour during her hour with him. She has no idea how to handle Gavin and only picks up on the negative aspects of his learning difficulty.

Pressure is being put on me to place Gavin in a special school as the EP says that he is refusing to do any academic work. The fact that written work is not something that is a major part of special education has escaped her notice. In my opinion Gavin and I are doing what the school would be attempting, namely giving a stable background, lots of encouragement and acceptance - things not in the National Curriculum.

At this time I am in desperate need of some encouragement to help Gavin at home in a home learning situation. I would particularly like to get in touch with parents who have been up against this problem and have been successful in getting their point across to their LEA namely that they are already giving 'special' education to their child at home and don't need their child to be taught somewhere else where there is no guarantee they'd get the same sort of help.

11 Sea-Horse Walk, Gosport, Hants PO12 1BH

## *from S. Bethune . . .*

For the last two issues of the Newsletter there have been no listings of London meetings, outings etc. It seems that I will have to subscribe to Taking Children Seriously and the London Supplement to find out what's going on. I can't afford this and don't see why I should be forced to do so. It seems very cliquey that where the other regions list their meetings so that they are accessible to all, London no longer does. What is going on?

c/o 8a Hamilton Park, London N5 1TP

## *from Claire Young . . .*

A hundred million thanks to all those who write in to the news-

letter. I've particularly enjoyed articles like 'Chemistry at home', the shared ideas and the supplements.

Spanking: I wish more was said on how not to spank, not just why. Two books I've found very practical are "How to talk to kids so they listen, how to listen to kids so they talk", and "Siblings without rivalry" by Faber and Marzlish.

Opening a file: yes, a great idea. When I was starting off I visited lots of EO families who were ever patient and generous with their time and ideas. Thanks to all of them for surviving my 1001 questions.

The contact list: I object to the advertising of what Alan Balfe has chosen to call 'Psi' skills. He asks for a better name and as a Christian I call them witchcraft. There is a Christian home education association and general Christian magazines where I can find contacts, share information and debate on spiritual issues. Would those with 'Psi' interests please use their own specialist publications likewise. Using the EO newsletter and contact list as a vehicle for propogating their beliefs is inappropriate and offensive. I am quite sure there will be an immediate response to the effect that one's beliefs cannot be separated from the rest of life. I quite agree. My relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour is central to my life but I think most non-Christians would find it irritating, if not offensive, if I used the EO magazine to advertise prayer meetings, counselling sessions and praise weekends. Please do not include 'Psi' activities in the contact list and also please stop using the EO newsletter as a New Age noticeboard. It is not within the remit of the EO aims as printed on the back of the Newsletter.

3 Wyvis Place, Middleton Park, Irvine, Scotland KA11 1NA

### *from Bryan Lawrence . . .*

I read with unease the two letters in newsletter 92 regarding support groups for those taking a formal or informal approach to their children's education. Surely EO is a support group, which needs all the support it can get from us home educators. The newsletter is there for moral support and information, not squabbling, a point put by Ann Hasler in the same issue.

If EO members all have this pent-up energy, put it to good use by publicising the fact that school is not compulsory by placing posters on noticeboards, shop windows etc. Every poster put up has the chance of helping a miserable child or a frustrated parent, because the LEA is certainly not going to tell them their rights.

115 Magemis Close, Rowner, Gosport PO13 9PR

### *from Ruth Midgley . . .*

I am in the process of writing a book about school phobia, based on my experience of helping my daughter with this condition. I would be very pleased to hear from any young person or adult who has or did develop difficulty in going to school.

My aim in writing the book is to stress that so called 'school phobia' is not an abnormal condition that must be cured by treatment that forces the child's eventual return to school, but

is an understandable reaction to what is happening to the child in his/her life in or out of school.

If you can help, please write to me at the address below.

37 Bowood Road, Sheffield, S11 8YF

### **from Edwina Theunissen . . .**

In view of Susan Long's piece in the newsletter (number 91) about EPOCH I thought it might be worthwhile to explain the alternative point of view.

Smacking as a considered means of discipline is not in any way linked with child abuse. Lack of discipline which leads to desperate parents losing control and lashing out certainly is. Many of us have our children out of school because we want them brought up in a secure disciplined environment where corporal punishment is an option. We are in EO because we have this attitude and these values. We love our children deeply. A child who can trust his parents, who knows that they will stick to their word, who knows that parents should be obeyed and that disobedience will always be punished is a secure child. As parents, we should not avoid our responsibilities. We should clamour for fulfilment of parents duties, not children's rights.

Anyone interested in this issue might find James Dobson's 'Dare to Discipline' (published by Kingsway, 1988) useful.

Pum Rhyd, Marchwiel, Wrexham, Clwyd.

### **from Sammy Vidal-Hall . . .**

Thankyou to all the families who replied to our letter about moving to South Devon. We are still very eager for families to move here, especially libertarian families. Libertarianism, autonomy, young people's rights, non-coercion are fundamental to why Arran and Willow don't go to school and we feel it very important that we, our family, are able to mix / make friends with other families thinking in this way.

So often we feel we have to dress up our beliefs, not to offend, but I don't want to hide, I want to empower myself and others as I have been empowered by much that I have read. So, no, we do not believe in formalised education; we don't teach anything; we don't test in any way. We think schools stink. Based on destructive foundations and a hidden and insidious curriculum; full of megalomaniac adults acting out their pains on children: Don't talk! Hands up! Do this! Do that! And no, I don't believe that schools are better than they were, however many times I'm told they are. John Holt said that schools are dangerous. They are.

But again, I want to emphasise that as parents, we must question our reasons for having our children out of school. Let us not pretend that among our ranks there are not families whose intentions are to further disempower their children and curtail more of their freedoms. I have heard about a mother who wanted her children to wear school uniform during their 'school hours' at home; another who took roll call; and worse, those families who believe that corporal punishment is intrinsic to learning. And I don't want to hear that we're all entitled to our own opinions so that

we can turn away and ignore these issues, content with our disharmony and never having to question our own underlying motives. "What e'er you will, ain it harm no-one" the pagans say.

Arran and Willow don't compartmentalise their lives into subjects: reading, writing, maths, art, science. They live their lives being. Arran and Willow be. That's what they do. What do you want to be when you grow up? I want to be.

They play and play and play; they are bored, sad, angry, happy, excited, frustrated; they love, fight and fight, they swear like we swear. They mirror us, how we're doing. We do good, we do bad. Yes, our family battles; we row, we scream, we cry, we mend, we fail, we hurt each other but our belief in our children's right to their power and goodness is never shaken.

I don't want to upset people but I must speak my truth. As coordinators for this area we are available to all sorts of different families who need information or help in linking up with other families with similar interests etc; but in this letter we are the Vidal-Hall family wanting to make contact with other libertarian families who are interested in moving to an area which has long been associated with forward thinking.

Somewhere in the world there needs to be a place focussing on non-schooling combined with liberty.

Thankyou to Heather Parker for saying she would coordinate a non-schooling libertarian group (last newsletter). Please write to her and support this.

Homecroft, Brownston Street, Modbury, South Devon PL21 0RQ.  
[Sammy has asked for copyright to be reserved on this letter.]

### *from Roland Meighan . . .*

In issue 90 of EO Newsletter, there appeared to be two contradictory views on the nature of schooling. On page six Lewis Perelman saw nationally organised schools as the last empire of socialism, by which I think he means communism, whereas Chris Shute on page nine saw them as the seed bed of fascist behaviour. Both are possible, though not necessarily at the same time. Enthusiasts for the National Curriculum and Central Control approach include both the communist Stalin and the fascist Hitler. Chris Shute is, in my view, accurate in identifying the main thrust of the present UK schooling system as of the fascist tendency and this probably applies in the USA too. The communist version could be seen in the former USSR, what was previously East Germany, Poland before the withdrawal of the Russians, and the former Yugoslavia.

The National Curriculum was supposed to achieve national unity and patriotism in the communist countries, and given the subsequent events, eg in Yugoslavia, it failed dismally. So the idea that the UK version will achieve national unity and establish patriotism by combining Scots, Welsh, Irish and English is a little dubious perhaps.

Both Lewis Perelman and Chris Shute are agreed on a probable cure for the disease - to abandon the idea of compulsory schooling altogether and replace it with something more intelligent.

As some of you will know, I think this new vision is encapsulated in the idea John Holt and I talked about during his last visit to England, which is flexi-schooling - a concept much more extensive than just flexi-time, I should add. Indeed, perhaps it should be renamed as flexi-education to signal the breadth of its vision.

113 Arundel Drive, Nottingham NG9 3FQ

### *from Helen Aldridge . . .*

When I wrote to the LEA back in 1992 following their request for me to complete one of the timetable forms they routinely send out, I sent a copy of my letter to the EO Newsletter which was subsequently printed in the June 1992 edition. As a result of this I received some very positive feedback from people as far away as Hong Kong who said they were interested in hearing how other people 'tackled' the LEA.

I have since received another timetable request and again I have written back to them stating why I could not fill one in. I wondered if other EO members would be interested in reading my reply:

"I am afraid I must inform you that I cannot fill out the timetable you have sent me. I make no pretence in saying that we in no way resemble a school establishment in any shape or form except in saying that education is in process all the time. Therefore, timetables are totally inappropriate for us and it would be a complete waste of time even trying to fill one out.

"I am confident that Amanita is growing in every aspect of her home 'schooling' instead of being in the confinements of a school-based education.

"She is in a loving, caring environment and, therefore, one that is most suitable for learning, be it on a primary or a secondary level. No two days are ever quite the same; each day bringing forth new and varied educational opportunities. As parents with healthy enquiring minds, I feel satisfied that we are ensuring a balanced and diverse education and one that is (MOST importantly) of interest to Amanita, because (as we all know) children only want to learn if they are interested.

"Amanita also has a flourishingly inquisitive mind and asks questions suitable for a child of more advanced years. I'm sure you will agree that it is Amanita herself who is the best one to decide what education she finds most befitting for her own requirements and age. I think you will find a child of near secondary school age (as Amanita is) would find herself pretty hard pressed to show an interest in any kind of 'teachings' designed for a younger, primary 'school' aged child. Therefore it is only natural and logical that Amanita chooses to be educated in a manner totally relevant for one of her age and ability. I would go as far as to say that her home 'schooling' covers a much broader array of subjects than others of the same age whom she remains in contact with from her school days.

"I really cannot see the point of your enquiries as to when Amanita has the chance to meet 'other children and adults' as quoted on form EDH2 as this indicates that you expect home 'schoolers' to be unsociable! Home education can be as formal or informal as you

like it to be (so long as educational opportunities exist ... which of course, with home 'schooling' they always do!) which means there are always AMPLE occasions when Amanita has the chance to meet up with people, adults and children alike.

"It GREATLY surprises me, actually, that you even ask me this when you consider that children at school are confined in classrooms with (mostly) 30 or so other children of (mostly) the same age and ONE other adult. To illustrate my point, when Amanita has her old school friends over to stay the night, you will (more often than not) find them unused to talking with adults and, therefore, only monosyllabic in their replies. I am quite sure you will find that Amanita can talk to anyone of any age, and I have heard from a great many adults what a pleasure they find her and how much they enjoy her company. I can quite proudly state that she was not so forthcoming when she was at school.

"Amanita has a great many friends, both old and new, and has the ability to make friends at any given opportunity, so the idea that being at home somehow limits her chances of social contact is quite astounding!

"As for the subjects we cover with her home 'schooling' I will oblige by listing the topics we have covered so far: Biology, Zoology, Human Biology, a little French, Chemistry, Mathematics, English Practice, Arts and Crafts, Music, Domestic Science, Geography, History, Social Studies, Psychology, Physics, General Knowledge, Sport, Yoga, Personal Development, Technical Studies and Sewing.

"If there any questions you care to ask about any of the above information, please do not hesitate to ask"

[Thanks Helen - I'm sure people would also be very interested in the reply you received - Ed.]

43 St Johns Street, Hayle, Cornwall TR27 4LN

### **from the Barton Family . . .**

I read the letter from the Reid family in the April/May newsletter with interest and concern and would like to make some some comments.

Firstly, our family has a policy of including our daughters (ages 8, 6 and 3) in planning the projects and timetables we use. However, I find the suggestion that they 'should have as much say if not more' in the overall proceeding rather naïve. I am lucky s our children accept advice happily but I am only too aware that this is not a universal phenomenon. Even so, I feel that my added years give me some advantage in predicting what knowledge and skills they will need in the future. I welcome the girls' ideas and have never ignored a special field of interest; yet I take the responsibility as primary educator seriously and supplement any weak areas which I feel is my rôle as an adult.

Secondly, I was sad to see that the Reid family seemed to have misconstrued the 'structured/formal approach to learning' as being Victorian/coercive. This couldn't be further from the truth. Our children left school because of a haphazard, unstructured education

in which they bored, disempowered and frustrated by a lack of direction. The structure in our home is as much our children's preference as ours, suiting both their personalities and their needs. It isn't a restriction, but an educational liberation.

Lastly, we gained the idea from the Reid's letter that because our beliefs differ from theirs, they regard our membership with hostile endurance. I would have thought that any EO family would want what was best for an individual child and since both the formal and informal methods have been shown to produce happy, healthy adults (see letter from Patricia Knox, Feb/March Newsletter), why be prescriptive against methods unlike your own? There are a great many families like ours and without our membership the viability of EO as an organisation and everyone's rights to educate at home would be weakened. We even present a more understandable and acceptable 'face' to the suspicious sectors of the general public. This is of benefit to everyone in building bridges.

We hope that our impressions from this letter were wrong. We are liberal enough to enjoy the wonderful diversity of EO and would have thought the very nature of its membership would entail some liberalism in return. We'd hate to see EO become a narrow minded, narrow structured shadow of its former self.

27, Quarry Road, Old Town, Swindon, Wiltshire SN1 4EN

### *from Harold Sheckler ...*

Some people think that conflicts are bound to happen, and the two or more parties involved will have to fight it out like a verbal boxing match. 'Mediation UK' takes a different point of view. It has a list of mediation centres/projects in the UK. Most of these centres will try to solve any kind of conflict: conflicts between neighbours, within the family, landlords/tenants, big conflicts or small. Most relevant to EO is conflict between EO members and the LEAs. It also may help EO with its internal conflicts.

Each centre/project has trained volunteers. These are experienced mediators who don't take sides. Their job is to get both sides to communicate with each other and to put forward ideas that can be agreed by both sides to solve the conflict.

If anyone in EO is involved in a conflict they can phone Mediation UK on (0272) 241234 and they will refer you to your nearest mediation centre.

Mediation UK doesn't claim to solve every conflict. The records show 80-90% of conflicts do get solved providing both sides agree to a third party.

The mediation movement is different because it is a grass roots movement. Anyone can join Mediation UK by phoning them and asking about membership. You don't have to become a mediator. The movement is international. In 1994 there will be a European Conference which might lead to a European network. So why not be part of the 'positive revolution' and create the future for the human race!

18 Margaret Road, London, N16 6UX

# THE INTERNATIONAL SECTION

## FRANCE

### INSTRUCTION FAMILIALE - UNE ENFANCE SANS ECOLE

"Ce journal que vous venez d'ouvrir entame sa troisième année...  
Il est devenu un grand bébé."

These are the opening words of the editorial from INSTRUCTION FAMILIALE N° 16, Janvier 1993. This is the magazine from a French counterpart to EO, "APPRENDRE AUTREMENT". They can be contacted par courrier:

31 route de Toulouse  
31 230 1'Isle-en-Dodon

par téléphone

61.88.16.36 de midi à minuit, (presque) tous les jours

pat télécopieur

61.88.16.36

The magazine costs 300F. for 12 issues post paid to the EEC.

## USA

### PEN-PALS IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

"Dear Friends,

We are a monthly homeschooling resource publication for hundreds of families in the high technology Silicon Valley area, south of the city of San Francisco, in the State of California. Many of our subscribers and their families have expressed an interest in corresponding with foreign homeschool pen-pals. We think this is an magnificent idea and are writing your group in hopes that you too might be interested in an exchange of this nature."

There follows a suggestion of a reciprocal pen-pal list exchange between the almanac and the EO newsletter. We don't have anything practical organised on that yet, but if you're interested, I'm sure you could write, giving a few personal details to:

Julie Castleberry Nunez, Editor,  
Home Educator's Almanac  
18515 Murphy Springs Court  
Morgan Hill, CA 95037  
USA

## ROMANIA

### A LETTER FROM TRANSYLVANIA

"Dear Education Otherwise

We used to be members a few years ago, but have since moved out to Transylvania where we now live permanently and where we still home educate our children.

We would like to stay in touch with EO members and would be willing to host families for visits to our home in the Carpathian mountains. Please write or fax if interested in visiting.

Our eldest children, Samantha (11), and Benjamin (8) would also

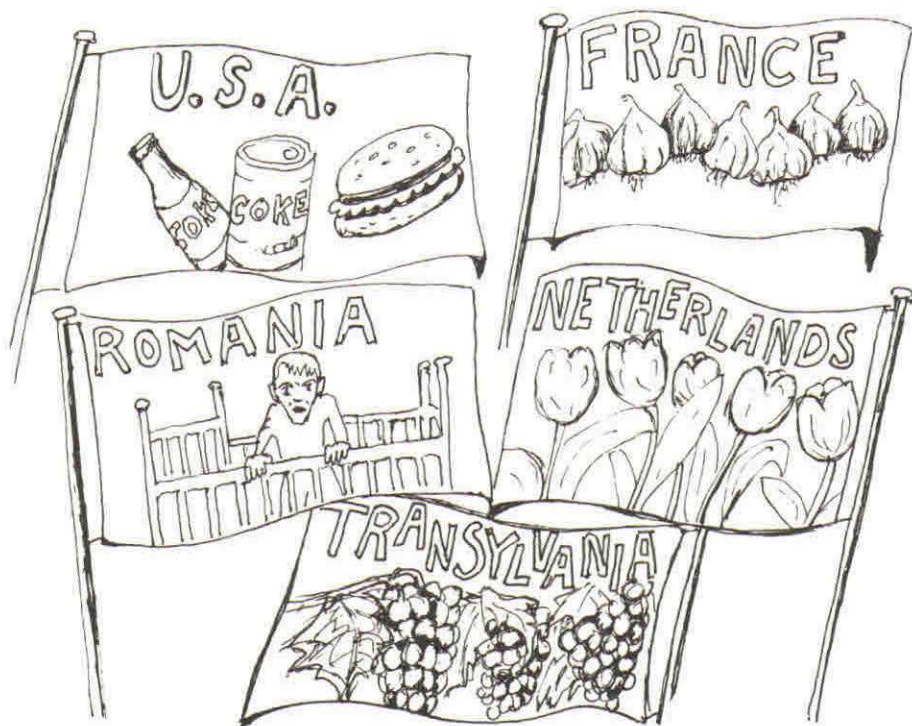
like pen-pals. The other two are Melody (6) and Kimberley (1). Best regards to all in EO - John and Cathy Davies.

Str. Szekely Mozes 28, M-CIUC 4100, Harghita, Romania.  
Telephone + 40 958 16370  
Fax + 40 958 11579

## THE NETHERLANDS

Thankyou very much to some half dozen people who telephoned me after my request for information on home education in the Netherlands in the last Newsletter. Unfortunately, every one of them could only give me a bleak message about it; it seems that EO is just not recognised in Holland. We still have hopes, however, that there may be ways around it - such as being expatriates only there on temporary contract, having written proof that we are allowed to do it in our own country or perhaps showing use of a correspondence course etc. One person who contacted us is doing research on home education in Europe and has written to the Dutch Education Minister whose reply we eagerly await. With the EC drawing closer together we should make more of a stand for EO in Europe. It is gratifying to find so much support from EO members and I will keep you informed of how we get on when we move there around September.

Jan Miller, Saith Ffynnon, Downing Road, Whitford, Hollywell, Clwyd CH8 9EQ Tel (0352) 714796



# SITUATIONS VACANT

## CO-ORDINATORS

Co-ordinators are needed for the following regions:

Cheshire, Central Manchester, Somerset, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Cumbria, Humberside, Berkshire.

Willing volunteers please contact Stephanie Fatcher, 50 Springfield Avenue, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 1HL.

## PUBLICATIONS BY POST

### A 'LARGE' VACANCY FOR OCTOBER 1st 1993 AT THE LATEST!

#### VITAL ATTRIBUTES:

- A large amount of dry, mouse-proof spare space.
- You are unlikely to move house.
- You have a Post Office in the vicinity.
- You can pack boxes well for post.
- You have a certain flair for organisation.
- You are not already heavily involved with EO organisation.
- You have a telephone.

#### JOB DESCRIPTION:

- Constantly: Storage of bulk EO publications
- Weekly: Dispatch of individual orders of publications.
- Bi-monthly: Dispatch of approximately 50 newsletters to individuals.
- Periodically: Dispatch of bulk publications to membership secretaries.
- Occasionally: Take delivery of additional stocks of secretaries publications.
- Intermittently: Re-order publications as required, both for main stocks held and for membership secretaries (from outside publishers).
- Recurrently: Send simple accounts and sales check list to treasurer. Pay in cheques to EO account.
- Thrice-yearly: Inform meeting of the current state of publications stocks (can be done by letter).
- Annually: Stock-check all publications and send totals to treasurer.

If you are interested, please ring Bruce or Christine Wallace on 044-581-225 in the first instance.

## PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR

**URGENT!** Lynne Greenhough cannot continue as Publications Director after this issue of the Newsletter.

Please contact her for details if you are interested in taking on this rewarding responsibility. Her address is: 18 Park Street, Alfreton, Derbyshire, DE5 7JE, tel (0773) 836662.

## EDITORS

**Editors for the Newsletter and Supplements are always wanted!**

Contact the Publications Director for details.

# RESOURCES

Where do you get catalogues from? Angelika Wolter from Lancashire has compiled a helpful list of suppliers.

## **BOOKS**

- Oliver & Boyd  
Pinnacles  
Harlow  
Essex CM19 4BR
- Longman Group UK Ltd  
Harlow  
Essex CM19 4BR
- Heinemann Educational  
PO Box 381  
Oxford OX2 8BR
- Ginn & Company Ltd  
Prebendal House  
Parson's Fee  
Aylesbury  
Bucks HP20 2QZ
- Simon & Schuster Education  
Campus 400  
Maylands Avenue  
Hemel Hempstead  
Hertfordshire HP2 7EZ
- Nelson & Sons Ltd  
Nelson House  
Mayfield Road  
Walton-on-Thames  
Surrey KT12 5PL
- Usbourne Publishing  
Usbourne House  
83-85 Saffron Hill  
London EC1N 8RT  
(send £1 for catalogue)
- Ladybird Books Ltd  
Beeches Road  
Loughborough  
Leics LE11 2NQ
- LDA  
Duke Street  
Wisbech  
Cams PE13 2AE  
(books and learning aids)

Oxford University Press  
Walton Street  
Oxford OX2 6BR

## **Equipment**

- James Galt and Co Ltd  
Brookfield Road  
Cheadle  
Cheshire SK8 2PN
- Philip & Tracey Ltd  
North Way  
Andover  
Hampshire SP10 5BA
- Nes Arnold  
Ludlow Hill Road  
West Bridgford  
Nottingham NG2 6HD
- Hope Education  
Orb Mill  
Huddersfield Road  
Oldham  
Lancashire OL4 2ST
- ABCETA Playthings Ltd  
Educational Division  
19 Torkington Road  
Stockport  
Cheshire SK7 4RG  
(main supplier of multilink bricks)
- Many thanks for this list to:
- Angelika Wolter  
108 Tockholes Road  
Sunnyhurst  
Darwen  
Lancashire BB3 1LL  
Tel (0254) 771249

Angelika has quite a selection of books from the Oxford University Press and says that anyone in her area is welcome to visit and have a look at them.

# WHERE TO GET WHAT

The following publications are available from Bruce and Christine Wallace, 25 Diabaig, Achnasheen, Ross-shire, Scotland, IV22 2NE. Prices quote are for members only and include P&P to UK addresses. Please make cheques payable to 'Education Otherwise'.

## **School Is Not Compulsory**

New edition due soon. A guide to your rights. £2.50

## **Early Years**

Learning suggestions for the under-twelves. £2.50

## **Later Years**

Learning for older children, plus GCSEs. £2.50

## **Teach Your Own**

By John Holt. The philosophy of home education. Staggeringly good value for money! £3.85

## **Learning All The Time**

By John Holt. A practical guide covering reading, writing, numbers, science and music, as well as the wider issues of the nature of learning and parental involvement. £4.50

## **School's Out**

By Jean Bendell. A good how and why book by an ex-EO member and long-term home educator. £5.95

## **Contact List**

Free (to a good home!). Send an A5 SAE marked 'Contact List', with a 34p stamp to Bruce and Christine at the address above.

NOTE: the information in the contact list is confidential and is for the personal use of members only. Under no circumstances is it to be used for advertising, academic research etc.

## **EO Newsletters**

Single back copies of 1991 and 1992 issues. £1.00

## **Bargain Bundle**

Any four copies of EO newsletters (our choice) from 1987 to 1990. £1.50

## **Newsletter Digest**

Ninety pages of the best from 1982 to 1986. Incredibly good value for money! £1.50

## **EO Stationery**

Re-use labels - £2.00 per 100; leaflets, handbills, posters, forms and car stickers are freely available for publicity purposes. Headed notepaper for co-ordinators and office holders from: Lucy Charlton, Church Lane Cottages, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire LE8 0FT

# EDUCATION OTHERWISE OFFICERS

## GENERAL ENQUIRIES

Send SAE for membership and other information to: Education Otherwise, PO Box 120, Leamington Spa CV32 7ER. Recorded telephone message (0926) 886828.

## VICE CHAIR

Peter Edwards, 40 Leamington Terrace, Edinburgh, EH10 4JL  
Tel 031-229-6259.

PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR - **LUCY CHARLTON 0533-592118**

" " **CO-ORDINATOR - VACANT**

## GENERAL SECRETARY

Pam Stevenson, 25 Wyndham Road, Dover, Kent CT17 0BH Tel (0304) 210997

## TREASURER

Michael Cook, 34 Beacon Road, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 6DJ Tel (0227) 367059

## PUBLICITY OFFICER

Jane Lowe, 5 Elm Gardens, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL8 6RX Tel (0707) 390070

## SINGLE PARENT FAMILY CONTACT

Jenny Blower, 15a Athelstan Road, Hastings, East Sussex TN35 5JB Tel (0424) 722720

## SPECIAL NEEDS

Sylvia Jeffs, 16 St Bernards Road, Solihull, West Midlands B92 7BB Tel 021-706-6460

## CO-ORDINATORS' SECRETARY

Stephanie Fatcher, 50 Springfield Avenue, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 1HL Tel (0246) 239048

## SCHOOL PHOBIA SUPPORT

Pam Stevenson, 25 Wyndham Road, Dover, Kent CT17 0BH Tel (0304) 210997

## SCHOOL PHOBIA YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUPPORT

Angela White, 30a Field View Close, Exhall, Coventry, West Midlands CV7 9BT Tel (0203) 312461

## SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

Address changes and membership renewals: Alan Balfe, 10 Highlands Road, Mountsorrel, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE12 7HH Tel (0533) 376752

## REGIONAL ENQUIRIES SECRETARIES

East Anglia	Sandie Cottee	(0268) 733259
Midlands	Gillian Brown	(0922) 414286
Scotland	Mike & Rose Barbour	(0786) 824210
Wales	Miryam Bush	(0269) 861069
London	Jeffrey Bengé	081-441-7528
S.E & S. W.	Jude Ashley Walker	(0983) 78680

## REGIONAL MEMBERSHIP SECRETARIES

Scotland and the North	Lorna Brown, 130 Greenock Road, Bishopton, Renfrewshire, Scotland PA7 5AS
Wales & Midlands	Gillian Murely (0785) 48753
London & Home Counties	David Bettie (0843) 583260
South East	Isobel Hewitt, 66 Goldington Avenue, Bedford MK40 3DA
South West	Maggie Swatridge (0503) 72087

**HELPLINES: CHILDLINE (0800) 1111 KIDSCAPE 071-488-0488**

# education otherwise

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

Our principal aims are to:

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

For further information send an A5 (approx. 6"×8.5") stamped self-addressed envelope to:

Education Otherwise  
PO Box 120,  
Leamington Spa,  
Warwickshire,  
CV32 7ER

Printed by: Argraffdy Arfon, Penygroes, Caernarfon. Tel (0286) 880322



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