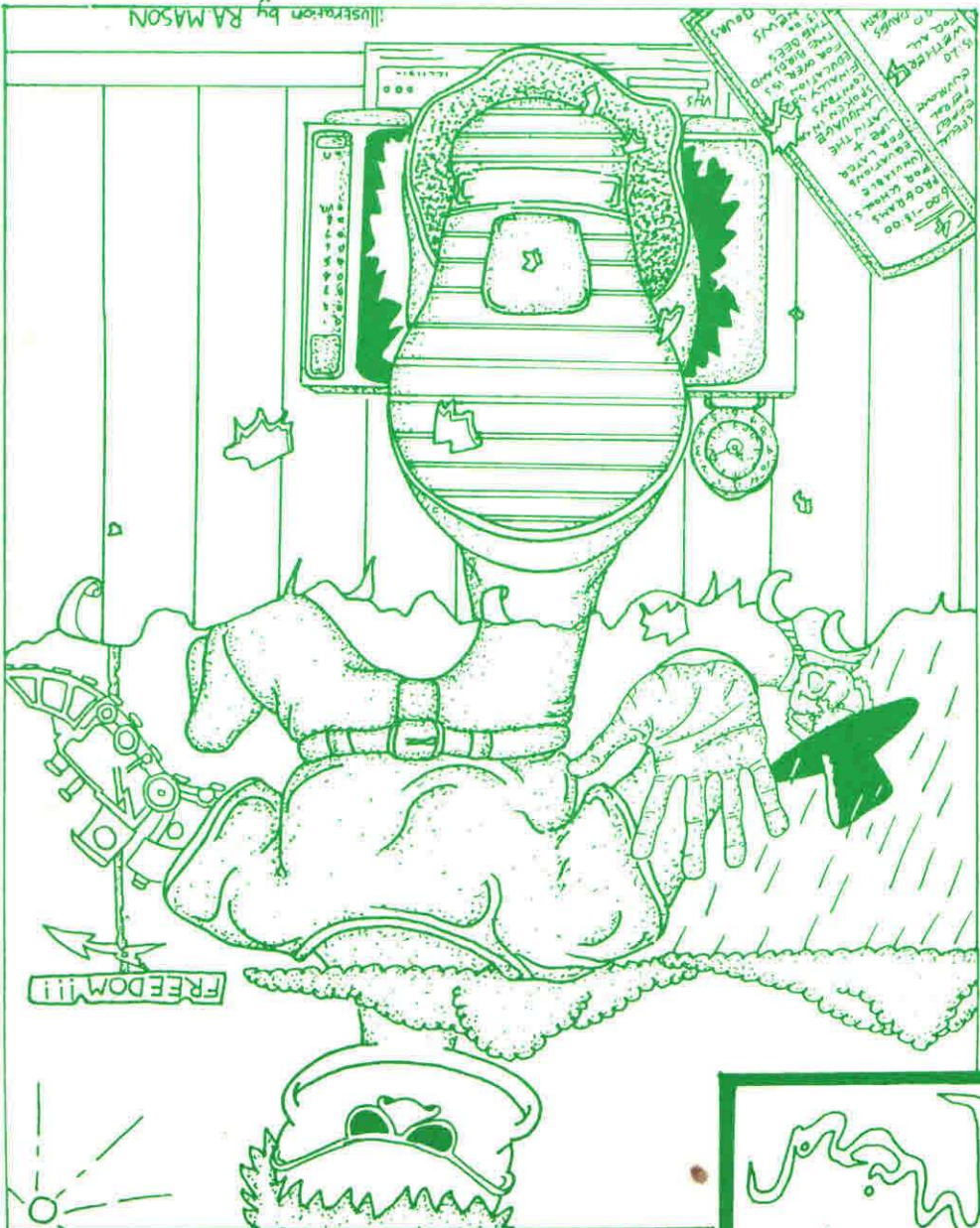


Illustration by RA MASON



JUNE 1994

NEWSLETTER 98

OTHERWISE

OTHERWISE Q&A: THE EDUCATED

ALWAYS ONE STEP AHEAD IN BODY AND

EDUCATION

12/26/94

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the editor, nor of Education Otherwise as a whole.

This newsletter is edited by volunteer members of Education Otherwise and its primary purpose is to provide support and communication between members.

Volunteers are always wanted – please contact the Publications Coordinator (see inside back cover).

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A reminder to readers

The EO Newsletter accepts advertisements, offers of services, articles and notices of social events in good faith and cannot be held responsible for the consequences of responding to any of these. Readers are reminded that sensible caution should be exercised when responding to such.

The next issue

The deadline for the August issue is July 1st 1994.

Send your contributions (clearly marked "for publication") to the appropriate editor (see below) as soon as possible. Please include your name, address and telephone number. Contributions are more likely to be included if they are concise and it would be helpful if they were typed. Some editors may be able to use a copy on computer disk.

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Editorial

Welcome to the latest issue of the newsletter. We are the Kipling family – Carol, Stuart, Merlin (18), Zak (16) and Elka (11). We've been members of EO for about fourteen years now, since the days when the Contact List was a couple of sheets of A4. We've seen a lot of changes, but I hope EO will continue to thrive. We've certainly appreciated the support, and the many friends we've made through EO.

We've moved around a lot over the years, and got to know various local groups, including Shropshire, Norfolk, Sussex and Hampshire, so hello to anyone out there who remembers meeting us along the way. Last year we moved to Devon, and we're enjoying getting involved with the local group here.

Incidentally, although the whole family are official editors, in fact all the credit should go to Zak. It was his idea to edit a newsletter, and he has handled

the entire process himself, apart from this editorial. I hope you enjoy it.

Carol Kipling, 7 The Hamiltons, Torquay Road, Shaldon, Teignmouth, Devon, TQ14 0AY.

PS We'd like to say thank you to my nephew Ra Mason (also home educated) for the artwork on the cover.

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The Changing Face of EO

The problems we are facing in Education Otherwise stem from growth and success, not from failure or neglect.

This is a successful, competent, functioning organisation, and we fulfil our role of supporting new families, and each other, on a daily basis. The respectability of our role as bridge-builders and negotiators between families and LEAs is growing with every contact. There are pockets of ignorance, but EO is making a difference to the lives of individual children (and families) which is surely what the group set out to do almost twenty years ago when it was formed.

As a coordinator I know personally of the difference that the knowledge and support of an EO group can make to a family who are all involved in one member's misery and unhappiness. The reward for me is to see the whole family grow in self-esteem and confidence and this in turn enables them to help others. We have an excel-

lent network nationwide. However, there is still work to do, and more changes will be forced upon us by circumstance or invited by us as a benefit to the organisation.

The change and evolving in EO in recent years can be difficult for the original members to accept and acknowledge, but any healthy group must grow and healthily disagree in the process. In my experience the majority of new members are joining now as the result of a crisis situation. They really don't want the whole ethos of EO start-up theory, which seemed to include paid-up membership of the Labour Party, vegetarianism, grow your own goat, etc. EO was originally part of a holistic approach to life in general. Our new members seem to need only the answer to a specific problem. If EO can provide that solution they are delighted and grateful, but EO is only a *part* of their lives. They have social lives, jobs, friends, businesses and a local EO group – their only

connection with other EOers is that their children aren't in school.

Hence the futility of be-moaning lack of support for National Meetings. If people don't attend, shouldn't we look at what is *not* being offered? I have often voiced this opinion about truancy. We look at what the pupils *don't* like about the institution. Shouldn't EO be doing the same with National Gatherings? What aren't we offering? What do people want? *Do* they want National Gatherings? Are we able to offer what they do want?

Personally, I think that EO's impetus has shifted from the meetings, where it all happened historically, to the national spread of EO supporters which we have now – delivering the word, socialising locally, writing to local papers and meeting LEAs and Advisors. The meetings are no longer representative of EO's

function (especially the last few), but the people in the nooks and crannies of this country are – they can walk past you on the street unrecognised, but that doesn't lessen the vale of what they do on EO's behalf. I've never met Bob Emmett, but that doesn't negate the sterling work he did. I only mention him because most of us know his name, but who's seen him at a meeting?

The recent inference that non-attendance at meetings meant unrecognised appalled me and upset a lot of the group here in North Yorkshire. *All* our local efforts need to be acknowledged, and if we don't want to attend meetings because we are broke, shy, busy, pregnant, working or have other fish to fry, that's OK. If we don't want to spend *ten hours* sitting on hard chairs in a cold portacabin without even a sniff of a tea bag (Chingford, March 1994) then that's even more OK.

EO MEETINGS ARE NOT COMPULSORY EITHER!

Sue Clare, 6 Elmslac Road, Helmsley, York.

(Supported by the North Yorkshire group.)

A Modest Proposal

Chris Shute

In "Escape From Childhood", John Holt proposed that any person, child or adult, who wanted to should be allowed to vote. John always had an engaging way of saying wonderful, heretical things in a tone of sweet reason which made them sound no more shocking than taking tea with one's maiden aunt, but even he couldn't quite make the idea of pre-teens lining up to mark their ballots look completely sane. Indeed, he asked several children what they thought about taking part in the democratic process, and some of them thought it was a dodgy proposition at best. Children, they said, wouldn't know enough about politics to decide how to vote. Anyway, they would probably put their cross where their parents told them to, making nonsense of the whole business.

I used to agree with them. If there's one thing I assumed children couldn't do it was vote. After all, I reasoned, even intelligent adults differ radically about how the country should be run, and they at least have been through the school system, so they should have coherent ideas to base their choice on. If grown-ups are uncertain, how much more uncertain would children be?

"...in a democracy voters are powerful and have to be listened to."

Today I am of a different mind. I now think that letting children vote is not merely possible but necessary. That does not mean it will happen in the near future, but when you think that only ten years ago we all assumed that pupils would go on being caned throughout our lifetime – and theirs too, like as not – it becomes easier now that corporal punishment has been abolished in schools to imagine other taboos being swept aside as well, including the fixed age of majority.

Why should we give children the vote? Simply because in a democracy voters are powerful and have to be listened to. The Government may not like what they say, and may argue against it with all their resources of propaganda and media influence, but every few years the ruling party depends on them for its grubstake. It may avoid giving the electorate everything it wants, but it has to make sure that enough of them think well of it to give it yet another go on the Downing Street roller coaster after the next election. If we believe that our national attitude towards children needs to change we can be sure that it will not until it becomes a source of danger to the Whitehall mafiosi.

But you may object that children, however idealistically we view them, are simply not mature and knowledgeable enough to make capital decisions about our country's government. Certainly, if choosing a Member of Parliament were in reality as difficult as, for example, designing a building or learning to be a doctor, they probably aren't. But if you look at what voting involves, in this country at least, it is hard to put it in the same class as those.

Apart from small sectarian parties in Northern Ireland and a nationalist one in Scotland, there are really only two possible choices a voter can make (two and a half if you count the Liberal Democrats, but no one seriously expects to see them in power). Both Labour and the Tories present themselves as legitimate candidates to govern, and so they are, nor-nor-east. Both have experience of running the country, both consider that their programme could be made to work, and both offer a coherent set of principles which they present to the electorate in a form which has to be accessible to even the least perceptive. I have no doubt that the same people who invented the gross propaganda coups of "Labour isn't working" and the "Double Whammy" could explain their message to the sort of child who might want to vote for them.

We adults like to think we cast our vote after serious thought and a thorough weighing of the arguments, but the very fact that politicians now fill the pockets of the media agencies in exchange for misleading publicity

campaigns suggests that they see the electorate more as fish to be netted than as thinking people to be won by close argument.

The truth is that modern democratic politics in England are as much as anything about perceptions. The essential programme of any political party these days needs to be capable of being squeezed into the artificial boundaries of a slogan or a poster and many voters, I am convinced, never deconstruct that publicity into discrete ideas and policies. They do with their vote exactly what children do with their pocket money: it goes towards what they think will give them the greatest advantage.

There's nothing much wrong with that, as far as I can see, provided the chosen party delivers the goods – but to forbid one important section of the public to take part in it because they might not understand the issues involved is to draw intellectual distinctions between them and the others which are, let us be honest and say it, totally spurious.

It is worth remembering that until the early '70s people who now have the vote were denied it because the old guard thought that 18-year-olds were too immature to understand what voting was all about. When women were first given the suffrage they had to be 30 years old before they could use it. No one would stand for such restrictions today because the reasoning behind them is visibly daft. In the next few years I hope it will become clear that young people of sixteen are not so substantially less sensi-

ble than 18-year-olds that they might do something appalling with the vote like... well, like what? What can you do with a vote in this country other than give it to a party of your choice for reasons which seem right to you? Oh, you might find some children giving theirs to the Monster Raving Loony Party (who want to bring the voting age down to 16, as it happens), but they would only be doing the same as a few hundred fully paid-up adults. And who knows, the MRLP might have something to commend it after all!

But the best argument for allowing the vote to people under the age of 18 is simply that it would protect them more than any other measure from being marginalised. It would shift power into the hands of people who have never held it before, and it would confer on them such status that suddenly everyone who had been in the habit of deciding what was good for them without making any effort to find out if they agreed would find them demanding, as of right, to be listened to.

This new pressure on traditional authorities to give up their despotisms would certainly make them feel insecure. It could not be otherwise. The political establishment naturally fears change because it believes it was set up by God, Nature or History to hold the line against the hobgoblins which

lurk out there in the darkness, held back only by the bulwark of Our Traditions. I can't reassure anyone who believes that all change is necessarily suspect, but I can suggest that the relatively liberal society we live in today is the result of a succession of social movements, all of which struck someone at the time they took place as wild and likely to pull down the pillars of society. They didn't.

Instead, we got Constitutional Monarchy, Habeas Corpus, Manhood Suffrage and Votes for Women, not to mention Magna Carta and the TUC.

I want votes for everybody, whatever his age. However, I know that that's a step too far, so I would settle for 16 as an interim target. When we have realised that democracy doesn't fall apart in the hands of youngsters we could campaign for the voting age to be 15, then 14. Then we might see what happens when the people who run the education system from Whitehall suddenly realise that the subjects of their incontinent legislating can actually get them sacked.

If young people were able to vote while they were still at school it would be necessary for schools to help them make their electoral choice as well as possible. Serious politics would have to take their place in the curriculum, whether the Government liked it or not. It would no longer be possible for head teachers to pretend to them-

“...they might do something appalling with the vote like... well, like what?”

selves that their school was a secret garden, protected from horrid things like disagreement, turbulent ideas and the dedicated naughtiness inseparable from political commitment. The National Curriculum would be affected: you have to discuss with voters what they want to learn, and how they need to be taught. The process of schooling would change. It would become more investigative, more impertinently open-ended.

Educators would have to get used to defending not their expertise, but their use of it. The more bridges we allow to be built between teachers and taught, parents and their children – and the more we allow the latter to challenge the former's status, respectfully but openly – the more necessary it becomes for the adults to recognise that their knowledge and insight are not badges of office but only tools at the disposal of their pupils. They confer no rights to behave like tyrants or to block unauthorised thought. It is possible now for grown-ups to behave as if they did, because they do not feel that they are dealing with citizens but only with disenfranchised ciphers who cannot validly question them. Give young people the vote and the spurious omniscience of adults would be blown away.

And good riddance to it.

Chris Shute, 7 Kiln Way, Polesworth, Staffordshire, B78 1JF.

Thank you, Chris. At last someone agrees with me on the issue of votes for young people! The following quote from the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted by the UN in 1948) may interest you and other readers:

Article 21. (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

(2) ...

(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

This implies that everyone, including children of all ages, should have the right to vote.

ZK

Pen-friends

I am looking for a pen-friend. I am 37 and have five children aged ten, eight, seven, three and one. None has ever been to school. I would like to swap letters fairly regularly and frequently.

Della Knight, 2 Park Close, Dunkeswell Abbey, Nr Honiton, Devon, EX14 0RP.

Northern Area Legal Workshop

Sunday 3rd July in York

This workshop is specifically aimed at members and coordinators who are, or are willing to become, active in supporting families experiencing difficulties with Local Education Authorities or schools.

Contact Gwen Baldock on (0904) 421982 or Sue Clare on (0439) 770056 to book a place and to confirm time and venue.

Rob and Anne Wade will be facilitating.

Contact List Update

Lots of you have asked me for a copy of the Contact List, and I'm sorry that I don't have the time to respond to you individually. The Contact List has been out of print for some time now, but don't despair, for help is at hand! By the time you get this newsletter a new list should be on its way to the printer. As soon as it is available all members will be sent a copy. Thanks for being so patient.

Paul Lowe (Renewals Secretary),
5 Elm Gardens, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL8 6RX. Tel: (0707) 335825.

Important

EO's financial year ends on June 30th. Will all officers and coordinators who have expense claims please make them to that date, submitting them to me by July 15th.

The computer appeal fund has reached £800 (at May 13th) and is growing slowly.

A rumour is circulating that EO has a reserve fund of £20K. If anyone knows where it is and how we can get hold of it, please let me know!

Mike Cook (Treasurer).

Truancy Watch Update

After the launch of the Truancy Watch campaign I wrote to John Patten in December 1993 to alert him to EO's concern that home educated children would be mistaken for truants by well-meaning members of the public. I gave him details of the distressing experience suffered by a member in Staffordshire when an anti-truancy patrol interrogated them in public, and I asked him to ensure that all local authorities were aware of the rights of home educators. This is an extract from the reply which I received on 28th. April (!) from Jonathan Mears of the Department for Education:

"...Whilst of course recognising that some parents exercise their right to educate their children at home, the Secretary of State's endorsement of 'Truancy Watch' schemes concentrates on pupils out of school without good reason and does not refer to those being educated at home under arrangements approved by the local education authority. Furthermore, any approach to a young person has to be handled sensitively. The Government issued a letter on February 8 (copy enclosed) to all those authorities embarking on an approved 'Truancy Watch' scheme. The sidelined paragraph highlights the im-

portance of the establishment of guidelines governing approaches to young people of school age."

"Having emphasised that the schemes are not designed to question children who are being educated at home or who are out of school for a legitimate reason, recent events in Bootle, the growing problem of parentally condoned unauthorised absence and the real possibility of truancing children becoming the victims of crime prompted the Government to look for new approaches to the problem of truancy..."

The "sidelined paragraph" referred to in the letter runs as follows:

"Where authorities are embarking on approved Truancy Watch schemes, we would recommend that early attention be given to the establishment of guidelines governing approaches to young people of school age. Such guidelines should be drawn up in close consultation with the police and local business interests and should be drawn to the attention of all concerned."

Jonathan Mears' reply refers to "those being educated at home under arrangements approved by the local education authority". Either he is unaware that many home educators are not known to the LEA, or he is implying that their children would be included among the truants. If we were to challenge this point and draw attention to this fact, in the present climate

of suspicion and desire for control steps might well be taken to compel all home educators to register with the LEA. Although home educators would have nothing to fear from the LEA (and some parents choose to inform them anyway), any form of compulsory registration would raise an important matter of principle. The law has always acknowledged that it is the parent's primary duty to ensure that their children are educated, and any attempt to make home education conditional upon the LEA's permission would represent a fundamental and far-reaching erosion of parental rights.

Enclosed with the letter from the DfE was a copy of the Directory of Truancy Watch Schemes, plus details of the Truancy and Disaffected Pupils funding allocations 1994-95 (total: £14 million) and a copy of the Staffordshire Police news release "Working Together to Beat Truancy" (September 1993) publicising the pilot project. This information reveals the extent of the problem in which home educators have become entangled, and the news release expresses grave concerns about the links between truancy and juvenile crime. The problem is identified in the following terms:

"Parents have a legal duty to make sure that their children are properly educated and schools have a duty to look after children in their care, but truancy itself is a community problem. It is now quite common to see groups of youngsters congregating

in town and city centres. They enjoy the feeling of identity and group strength and this in turn can create a feeling of fear and insecurity amongst other members of the public. Surveys show that women in particular feel intimidated and fear either verbal or physical abuse by groups of youngsters. Yet no-one seems to challenge them any more. No-one asks what they are doing or whether they should be at school. Not wishing to get involved or fear of repercussion mean that truants simply become part of the backcloth of city centre life... Traders are aware of the feeling and fears of their customers and are naturally keen to promote a safe environment for the public to shop. Many are also parents and realise the need to ensure the education of our young people. Their involvement is crucial to the success of the scheme."

The news release continues to explain how the scheme will work, and it is worth quoting as it has been taken as the model for truancy watch schemes in many parts of the country:

"The Education Authority has sent, via schools, a 'Parents Guide to Truancy' to all parents of secondary school age children in the county of Staffordshire. The guide outlines legal obligations, reasons for truancy, signs to look for and where to go for advice... (then the Stoke on Trent pilot scheme is introduced)... Each participating shop will display Truancy Free Area stickers on their doors and in

their windows. The Education Authority has supplied each shop with referral forms and information regarding school holidays, teacher trainer days and local school telephone numbers. Shop and security staff have been trained to challenge youngsters suspected of playing truant. Specific guidelines have been laid down to ensure that this is done in the correct manner. A truant will, if possible, have their name, address, school and a brief physical description placed onto a confidential referral form and this will be forwarded to Education Welfare, who will carry out an investigation and contact the parents concerned. A uniformed Police Officer, together with an Education Welfare Officer, will make random patrols of the city centre area. If a truant is found, he or she will be taken to an Education Welfare office and their parents will be contacted. It is emphasised that under no circumstances are members of the public or shop staff outside their working environment being encouraged to approach young people."

The Children's Legal Centre has confirmed that neither the Police nor the Education Welfare Service has the right as a matter of course to compel a child to accompany them. A police officer who is a member of EO has pointed out that there is provision in the Children Act for the police to remove a child to a place of safety if there is grave and immediate reason to fear for the child's safety (for instance,

if a known pervert is following the child down the street). However, this is a very different matter from the routine rounding-up of stray children who are considered to be truants, and EO youngsters should not be subjected to such treatment while they are about their business in public places. If anyone has had experience of this, I would be very glad to hear from them about it.

So, what can EOers do to ensure that our rights are respected? Some suggestions were given in a leaflet accompanying the December newsletter, including carrying an EO membership card, giving an EO leaflet to anyone who questions you and writing to your MP and to your local paper to inform them about home-based education. EO car stickers are available (from Lucy Charlton - see inside back cover) and they are a useful way of getting the message across. Also, if there is a Truancy Watch scheme near you, it may help to take the initiative and approach any shops which display "Truancy Free Area" stickers. Ask for the manager and give them an EO leaflet, and ask them if the LEA has informed them of the rights of home educators. The DfE's directory of approved Truancy Watch projects gives brief details of schemes undertaken by the following authorities: Barnet, Barnsley, Birmingham, Bradford, Cambridgeshire, Camden, Cheshire, Cleveland, Coventry, Derbyshire, Devon, Dudley, Hammersmith and

Fulham, Haringey, Hertfordshire, Hounslow, Humberside, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Kent, Kirklees, Leeds, Lewisham, Liverpool, Merton, Newcastle, Newham, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, St. Helens, Salford, Sandwell, Sefton, South Tyneside, Southwark, Staffordshire, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Trafford, Wandsworth, Wigan, Wiltshire and Wolverhampton. Local coordinators in these areas have a copy of the information relating to the locality.

Finally, would it be useful if a badge were available to help to spread the word? Any other ideas?

Jane Lowe (Publicity Officer).

PS In case anyone else hasn't been reading their papers lately (see the Flaws' letter, page 10 of the April newsletter - no. 97) here is a note of

some of the media coverage which EO has received in the last five months or so: articles or references in the Times, the Guardian, the Telegraph, the Observer, the Independent, the Times Educational Supplement, the Daily Express, the Manchester Evening News, the Northern Echo, the Newcastle Sunday Sun, Family Circle, Woman's Weekly, R4's The World Tonight, Carlton TV - with work in progress for Bella, Yorkshire TV and Channel 4 Education. If anyone is willing to give a little time to help by being interviewed by the media, I'd be VERY glad to hear from you. GMTV's "The Big Breakfast" has been in touch to ask if a home educating family would like to take part in the show for a week, which would mean a holiday in London! Let me know if you're interested.

Bath Small School

This is a parent-run community secondary school. Non-selective and open-access, we teach mainstream GCSE subjects with an emphasis on spiritual and ecological values.

We offer a holistic education, in which:

- relationships between all members of the school can flourish and every individual is valued equally;
- everyone participates in the collective activities, from sports and drama to preparing lunch and cleaning;
- the small class size allows every child to develop his/her skills and interests to the highest standards.

Places are available from September 1994 in years 7 and 8.

For further information and/or an appointment, contact Rupert Lowe (Headteacher), Bath Small School, Brookleaze Buildings, Larkhall, Bath, BA1 6RA. Tel: (0225) 332220.

Regional Diary

Avon

Poppy Green is acting as a stand-in coordinator. Her phone number is (0272) 735091. We urgently need a permanent coordinator to liaise with the LEA and help many new families who wish to withdraw their from school, etc.

The Bath group has twice-weekly workshops. Please contact Andy Hannen and Jo Ball on (0225) 335118 for more information.

The Bristol group has weekly workshops plus skating and swimming sessions. Contact Kathy Nott on (0272) 668265.

Bedfordshire

Members from all areas are welcome to attend. Check before each event – bad weather may cancel. Phone if you need to know more. Call June McDonald on (0234) 341375 or Isobel Hewitt on (0234) 345780.

Fri 10th June. Swimming session at Robinson Pool, Bedford. Meet in entrance hall at 1:30pm for party rate. Non-party rate £1.60 for adults; 80p for children.

Wed 15th June. Fruit-picking at Summerfields fruit farm: strawberries, raspberries etc. Meet beside lake for picnic at 12:30.

Fri 17th June. 1:45pm. Session at "Activity World" in Rollers, Denbigh Centre, Bletchley with Bucks EOers. Party rate for child £1.50, adult 60p.

Mon 20th June. Picnic at Mowsbury Park, Putnoe, Bedford. Enclosed park is mostly giant sand-pit with digger, slide, swings, rocker etc surrounded by large open parkland. Woods nearby.

Fri 24th June. 2-4pm. Monthly get-together at Stephanie Quennell's house, 33 Cedar Road, Bedford. Tel: (0234)

266084. Come and chat, meet EO children and share worries and experience with new and longer-term members in the region.

Wed 29th June. 1:30pm. Swimming session at Oasis Beach Pool, Bedford. Wave machine, slides, Jacuzzi pools etc. Cost: adult £1.80, child £1.30, family £4.90.

Tues 5th July. Visit to Wicksteed Park in Kettering, Northamptonshire. Rides galore, large free play area; really good fun for all ages. Free entry, pay for rides. Meet for picnic in play area at 12 noon (the park opens at 10am).

Fri 8th July. Robinson Pool – as 10th June.

Tues 12th July. Activity World – as 17th June.

Fri 15th July. Picnic at the Boating Lake in Bedford, just over the Embankment Bridge. Range of boats for hire, including row and paddle boats. Meet at 12:30pm for picnic by the lake.

Tues 19th July. Swimming at Oasis – as 29th June.

Birmingham

See under “West Midlands”.

Buckinghamshire

Mon 6th June. 2:15pm. Great Holm Fire Station, Haddon, Great Holm, Milton Keynes. Guided tour with fire crew.

Fri 17th June. 1:45pm. Activity World, Rollers, Denbeigh North, Milton Keynes. Indoor adventure playground. Children £1.50, adults 60p.

Camping at Redfield, Bucks

**Friday 2nd September to
Sunday 4th September '94**

17 acres of gardens and woodland, tennis court, volleyball, barbecue area, self-catering. There will be a small charge.

For more details send an SAE to Diana Keegan, Redfield, Buckingham Road, Winslow, Buckinghamshire, MK18 3LZ.

Sat 25th June. 2pm. International picnic. Meet Pat Graupner and family at Willen Lake, Milton Keynes. For details call Pat on (0908) 562451.

Tues 12th July. 1:45. Activity World (see above).

Wed 20th July. 10:30am. Mead Open Farm. Stanbridge Road, Billington, Leighton Buzzard. Chance to meet and feed rare and commonplace animals on a working farm. Children £1.50, adults 75p.

Tues 26th July. 12:30pm. Windmill car park, off Bletcham Way, Caldecotte Lake, Milton Keynes. Picnic near the playground.

Wed 3rd August. 12:30pm for picnic on the green or 2pm for tour only. Quainton Windmill, Quainton, Aylesbury. Guided tour of six-storey windmill. Free, but donations welcomed.

We also hope to have regular monthly meetings at Interaction, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes in the first one in May goes well. There may also be a

relaunch of a local newsletter. For information on either of these, to check that any event is going ahead or for help with transport, phone Joyce Moore on (0908) 562451.

Cambridgeshire

See under "Fenland" for events on the Norfolk border.

Channel Islands

There is a new coordinator for the Channel Isles:

Karen Corbel, 28 Devonshire Place, St Helier, Jersey, JR2 8RD

Cheshire

There is a new coordinator for Cheshire:

Diane Anderson, 8 Nessina Grove, Wistaston, Crewe, CW2 8EL. Tel: (0270) 664060

Cumbria

We meet in Kendal every Wednesday from 1-4 pm in the Youth Centre, Castle Street. In the summer we sometimes go on outings though, so please phone before you come to check that we'll be there. We can also

send you our programme of planned activities for the next few months.

Pete and Mary (05242) 62049.

Derbyshire

For an up-to-date diary sheet of events please send an S.A.E. to Kerry Meek at 15 Meadow Close, Spondon, Derby, DE21 7GS or telephone (0332) 662596. We meet most weeks.

Devon

The Totnes group is growing and thriving. We now have a monthly newsletter with meetings and activities most days of the week. If you're thinking of moving to this area, please contact Sammy & Nick Vidal-Hall on (0548) 830716 for more information.

Although we are based around Totnes, we have members as far afield as Modbury and Exmouth.

If you live within reach of Totnes and you would like to receive our local newsletter, please contact Zak Kipling on (0626) 873952.

Dumfries & Galloway

New phone number for coordinators: (0848) 2421.

Fenland

(Cambridgeshire/Norfolk border)

Are you interested in getting together with other EO families in this area for outings during the summer, with a view to setting up regular workshops in the autumn? Some events planned for June to August with dates to be finalised. Contact Sarah Martin on (0945) 772336 for details.

Hertfordshire

Herts EO Thursday Club meets weekly at St Ethelreda's church hall, Old Hatfield (five minutes' walk from the railway station) from 1pm. We begin with a group activity – fortnightly creative dance alternated with guest speakers or workshops – followed by crafts, fun and games etc. Refreshments available.

We also have another weekly meeting for swimming, walks, Activity World and visits of interest.

There is a bi-monthly Herts EO newsletter and events list. For details phone Glyn on (0707) 335428.

Herts EO "Older" group (children aged 10+) meets every Friday at St Ethelreda's from 1-4pm for table tennis, volleyball, snooker, board games etc plus the opportunity for parents and children to socialise and share resources. Cost £1 per child. We also play badminton once a fortnight at the Birchwood Leisure Centre, Longmead, Hatfield. Cost £1 per person. Spare rackets available or better ones at 60p per hour for hire at the centre.

In addition we organise educational/interest visits. If you are interested in any of these activities or simply wish to make contact with other members with children in the "older" age range, please telephone Lynne Fox on (0707) 271594, Margaret Moore on (0992) 551744 or Donna Maskell on (0707) 328635. We would be happy to give what help we can.

Kent

June

Thursday 2nd. Open house at Cath Cooper's, 162 Bush Road, Cuxton. Tel: (0634) 715389. 12 noon onwards.

Thursday 9th. Open house at Sue and Bob Tully's, 44 Lower Road, Hextable, Kent. Tel: (0322) 664373. 12 noon onwards.

Thursday 16th to Sunday 19th. Fourth EO camp in Kent. Come to Headcorn to meet old and new friends. Enjoy four days camping in the Kent countryside. Activities, games, pancake breakfast, tipi, camp fires – fun for the child in all of us. Hot shower and flushing loo. For more information ring Sue or Keith Burchett on (0732) 870344.

July

Thursday 7th. Open house, Cath Cooper's – as 2nd June.

Friday 15th. Deal Castle. Meet 11:45 at castle entrance for free group admission. Weather permitting we plan to spend the afternoon on the beach near the castle.

Thursday 21st. Open house at Amanda MacKenzie's, 16 Brambletree Cottages, Borstal, near Rochester. Tel: (0634) 502154. 12 noon onwards.

August

Thursday 4th. Open house at Sue and Keith Burchett's, 2 Easterfield Cottages, East Malling, Kent. Tel: (0732) 870344. 12 noon onwards.

For more information about any event ring Sue and Keith Burchett on (0732) 870344 or Amanda MacKenzie on (0634) 402154.

Open house days: please ring the family concerned in the morning to check that there are no alterations to arrangements.

London (North)

We meet on alternate Mondays (6th June, 20th June etc) during term time only for ice skating at Alexandra Palace. 12:30-1:30, £1.50 per child, followed by cooperative games in the grounds if it's fine or at a nearby community centre if wet.

On Tuesday mornings there is a recorder class and a dance class.

For more details of these or any other outings that have been arranged please ring Jo Jenkins on (081) 883 8052.

Middlesex

During the next few months I intend to start a learning group, initially for under-fives, at my house. I live in Enfield. I was a member of EO some years ago as I removed my eldest son from school at the age of eleven. He is now eighteen and going to university to study for a degree. I now have a three-year-old son, Martin, for whom I have to decide about his educational future. I would like him to learn through play and with others. Would you like to join us on a regular basis? If so, give me a call.

Jan Ridley, 1 Bodiam Close, Enfield, Middlesex, EN1 3HZ.

Norfolk

See under "Fenland" for events on the Cambridgeshire border.

Oxfordshire

Oxford fortnightly meetings are becoming progressively relaxed and at the same time fuller in their content. Notice is therefore given that lunchtime will henceforth be cut from 2 hours to 3 thus avoiding the need for coffee breaks.

Forthcoming meetings at St Margaret's Institute: June 1st, 15th, 29th; July 13th, 27th; August 10th, 24th, 31st. £1.50 per family.

Also on offer by popular demand:

Friday 24th June. Excavations, dam building and picnic at Shotover Park sandpit, 12 noon. Bring spade, towel and food. Free.

Wednesday 6th July. Blenheim Palace adventure playground and share a picnic. Meet in playground 12 noon. Potentially free.

Sunday 7th August. Punting from Cherwell Boathouse 11am to Victoria Arms riverside pub for rest and recuperation (possibly lunch and a swift half) and back

again with a following wind, God willing. Cost £7 per hour per six people (one punt's worth). Followed by a game of rounders in University Parks?

For further information ring Pam Bellinger on (0869) 277391.

Shropshire

We run workshops and outings every Friday during term time. Call Mandy Patter on (0952) 882780 for a list of events.

Suffolk

We meet every three weeks at Wetherden Village Hall for informal sessions. Phone Sarah Guthrie on (0329) 783678 for details.

Surrey/Sussex

June 7th. Open day in Horsham.

June 22nd. Crawley adventure playground.

June 29th. Ice skating at Guildford.

Early July. English workshop day.

For more details and to check dates and for other events ring Isobel Bogucki on (0403) 261178.

There is a monthly local newsletter for Sussex available from Lyndon Pugh, The Barn, Mongers Farm, Barcombe, Lewes, East Sussex, BN8 5BQ. Cost £3.50 for six issues or £7 for a year.

Tayside

We no longer wish to be coordinators for the Tayside Region. Is anyone else in the area willing to take it on? If so, or for further details, please contact us on (0821) 650409.

Rosalind and Kevin Veale.

Warwickshire

All are very welcome to join us for the following meetings:

June. A visit to the Botanical Gardens in Birmingham is being organised. For details please contact Lesley McKenzie on (0203) 318401.

July. We are hoping to make a visit to the Cotswold Farm Park. For details please con-

tact either Vicki Rumble on (0203) 502280 or Trish Archer on (0203) 422575.

August. Saturday 20th from 1:30pm onwards there will be maths games at the house of the Bennetts. Please bring ideas and equipment. For details please contact Vivienne on (0608) 641354.

West Midlands

Sat 18th June. Cannon Hill Nature Centre 2:30pm.

Sat 16th July. Cannon Hill Park. Meet outside Art Centre 2:30pm.

If anyone is interested I will arrange a meeting at the Botanical Gardens. I can get a reduced rate of £1:60 per head on ten or more, but I will need to know on or before July 16th.

For further information contact Carol and Paul Willis on (021) 455 9742

Wiltshire

There is a new coordinator for Wiltshire:

Karen Barton, 27 Quarry Road, Old Town, Swindon, SN1 4EN. Tel: (0793) 486035.

MATHS FOR THE TIMID

by Sandie Cottee, Essex.

Unlike Betty Ball (my co-conspirator for this supplement) I am not a qualified teacher, in fact I would not profess to even being very good at maths! However, my saving grace is my natural interest in all things around me, and I admit to being of one those strange people who actually enjoy maths. Marc (18) also admits to this, and over the years we have spent many happy hours playing and inventing our own games, and investigating ideas. When I started educating my own children at home maths took on a whole new meaning to me, not the dull text books maths I knew at school, but exciting patterns and discoveries which would sometimes carry on for hours at a time. We went on to use Letts Foundation Skills for Maths (simply because I liked the book) but we never worked towards any prescribed course or plan. As Marc approached 14 I knew he needed more stimulus than I could offer so he started as a part time student at our local college. Marc did a GCSE maths course with mature students and this worked very well. Fortunately Marc had an excellent tutor who was also enthusiastic on the subject, and Marc enjoyed his time there, achieving a good grade. Incidentally, this proved my theory that a good grounding counts for everything. At school students spend two years preparing for their maths GCSE. Marc did nothing special in the way of preparation yet he coped effortlessly with the work, and did the exam in two and a half terms.

I'm sure Marc's interest in the subject was a great help. However, Emma (16) is a different kettle of fish. Show her something six times and she'll still forget it on the seventh. For this reason, over the years, I have approached maths from a wide range of angles. If one idea did not work, I'd simply try another. We usually get there in the end, sometimes slowly, but hopefully in an interesting and fun way. Despite this flexibility Emma tells me to add that she does not especially like maths - I guess you can't win them all. The only consolation is that I feel sure Emma would have like maths even less, had she gone to school.

Neither Marc or Emma have ever been to school and from the outset we did lots of practical maths. Weighing, estimating and measuring were natural everyday occupations, and I remember sighing with surprise and relief when the LEA advisor called for the first time and commented 'that is what maths is all about'. Emma was standing on a chair at the kitchen sink, surrounded by jugs and strainers, endlessly pouring water from one container to another. Emma was three at the time, and little did he know that I'd only suggested Emma occupied herself in this way as I knew it would absorb her long enough for me to have a reasonable conversation with him. Meanwhile Emma added bubbles to the water and during our conversation drifts of these floated around the room, some landing on the advisor's head, making it very difficult to continue the conversation without a silly grin on my face. We did not see another advisor for over 5 years!

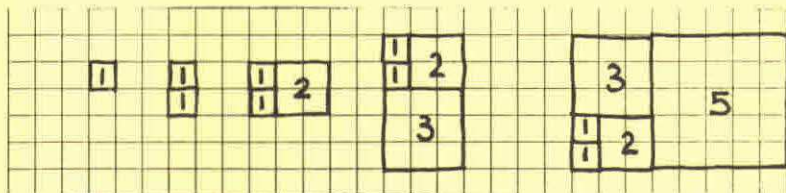
Meanwhile we did set regular time aside for written maths, with an emphasis on variety. We used smarties for sorting, making graphs etc... eating them at the end was an added incentive. We would get funny looks from the neighbours when we would go into the road to measure the length of a dinosaur, but they got used to it eventually and would just smile sympathetically. For measuring such lengths we either used a metal retractable tape, or more usually, a home made version - a length of string knotted at 1 metre intervals with a small piece of wood each end.

As a keen gardener I always tried to think up ways of doing practical things outside. When we dug our new pond Marc and Emma calculated the surface area, volume, and size of the liner we would need to buy. They calculated the cost of different types of liner, and put all this information into a special 'garden' book. We took photos during the different stages and over the next few years the book was often added to with more photos, drawings and notes about the pond life. I found this approach made the exercise more meaningful. It wasn't just a contrived way of getting pencil on paper, but a useful record which we could later refer to. We did similar projects when building a patio, designing the garden, and growing vegetables. It made their efforts seem valued and worth while.

We also carried out simple investigations. eg. You have a 16 metre length of chicken wire with which to build a run for a pet guinea pig. What dimensions would give the largest size run? Without experience many children might immediately say the run would always be the same size... I know some adults who would also say this. However (here comes that length of string again!) try working out the area of runs measuring 2m x 6m, 4m x 4m, 3m x 5m. I always found Marc and Emma were happy to carry out such experiments as they were ideas they could relate to, and led on to an understanding of area and perimeter.

The garden also proved ideal for discovering the Fibonacci sequence. Have you ever stopped to look closely at the way plants grow? In particular look at the growth spirals found on many plants eg. cones, pineapples, cacti, and sunflowers (to name but a few). Leonardi Fibonacci was an Italian mathematician who introduced zero to Europe and discovered a fascinating sequence of numbers which comes up in the most unexpected places. Begin with zero and find the next number in the sequence by adding the two previous ones, eg. 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13..... Discover for yourself how often this sequence shows itself in nature, count the number of clockwise and anti-clockwise spirals on a pineapple for example, and just keep your eyes open next time you go round the garden centre or supermarket. Or just look in your own garden...

Use squared paper and outline a single square. Add a second square. Draw a third square to fit the longest side, and continue doing this, adding squares each time to the longest side. If you carry on the process you will get very close to a golden rectangle. The golden rectangle is another interesting investigation but do you see anything else familiar?



You can also have great fun playing around with the number 9. Do you know an easy way of doing the 9 times table on your hands? First hold your hands up, palm upwards, and imagine your fingers are numbered 1 to 10 from left to right. Now, say you want to multiply any number by 9, lets use 5 for

example. Simply fold down the finger numbered 5. You should have four fingers sticking up on the left of this finger, and five on the right hand side. $5 \times 9 = 45$ (four tens and a five). Try it for 3×9 . Third finger from left folded down... leaving two (tens) and seven .. $3 \times 9 = 27$.

Got it?

Another way of checking products of 9 is to add the digits.

$$1 \times 9 = 9$$

$$2 \times 9 = 18 \quad (1 + 8 = 9)$$

$$3 \times 9 = 27 \quad (2 + 7 = 9)$$

$$4 \times 9 = 36 \quad (3 + 6 = 9)$$

Kahl Gauss also had a way with numbers. As a six year old boy his teacher asked the class to add up all the digits between 1 and 10. Kahl quickly realised that $1 + 10 = 11$, $2 + 9 = 11$, $3 + 8 = 11$, $4 + 7 = 11$ and $5 + 6 = 11$. That gave five pairs totalling 11. ($5 \times 11 = 55$) ... and thats the answer.

There is a quick formula, add the highest and lowest number.

Divide into pairs, and multiply the 2 numbers together. eg:

$$1 + 100 = 101$$

$$100 \text{ divided by } 2 = 50$$

$$101 \times 50 = 5050 \text{ - the total of the digits between 1 and 100}$$

(try it the long way if you want to check!)

There is a slight variation when you use an odd number. Use the basic routine but try working out your own formula.

I wanted Marc and Emma to have a good understanding of how numbers work. The trouble is, this is sometimes only be acheived after much practice and this can become boring. So I devised a wide range of games. These ranged from card games such as snap or pairs and we adapted the rules as we chose. For example, we might chose a product of 20, and you could win a hand by having cards showing a two and a ten, or a four and a five. We also played versions of gin rummy using, say, any four cards to total 20. We began by purely adding the numbers, and later adapted the rules to allow any means: Cards showing 10, 6, 2 & 10 could be said to make 20 ie. $10 \times 6 = 60$, $60/2 = 30$, $30 - 10 = 20$.

I also made board games, adapting the basic rules and lay out to add interest and variety. A simple board might have consisted of 30 squares, each numbered. Two dice would be thrown, the totals multiplied, and if the product appeared on the board the player would cover this with a counter. It was as much a game of chance as skill, since you might throw a 5 and a 4 but find all the '20' squares covered. This made it abit more fun, but also meant that a less able player stood as much chance of completing the game. The player with most counters on the board wins that round. A similar version consisted of tessellating hexagons, with equal number across and down. A number was again written inside each hexagon, and a counter placed where appropriate. However, the difference with this board is that you had to try and complete a row of counters from one side of the board to the other, via adjacent hexagons. Players could try to block moves, in order to gain the advantage, and this not only called for a certain amount of strategy, but sometimes caused the player to try and work out a number that they might not be over confident with using! We used this board for everything ranging from fractions to square roots - it always proved entertaining and offered lots of practice without seeming like a maths session. Sometimes two dice were thrown, as in

the previous examples, or on other occasions the player would choose a number shown on the board, mentally work out the square root (or what ever) and give the answer. The second player would check this (on a calculator if necessary) and if correct, the player would lay his counter. Somehow none of these seemed like practice in basic skills, and while I feel there is a place for written work, I feel Marc and Emma gained alot more from these games - lots of mental calculations, discussion, variety, and equally important - fun.

There are many excellent games on the market, one of our favourites being Hextension (produced by Spear's). Each player has a coloured grid and a set of hexagonal cards. Each card has three numbers written on it, with a corresponding coloured line running diagonally across. The object is to lay the cards so that the different coloured lines join. Eg. for every red line touching you gain 7 points, so if you have three cards in a row, with a continous red line, you gain 3×7 points. You do not gain any points for single cards, only lines of 2 or more. You then total all the complete lines, highest score wins. Because the cards must be laid touching, you can not always choose to lay a card where you might wish, therefore the game calls for strategy. Hiron also produce some excellent strategy games, well worth looking out for.

Other games we like are Yatzee (there is a number and word version - both excellent). This is a game based on dice. 'Pig Out' is an amusing game, both are based on chance, but each could provide an enjoyable approach to the idea of probability.

It is often the very basic concepts that cause difficulty. I meet so many children (many, teenagers withdrawn from school) who can't subtract and divide confidently. Formulas and rules might work with some people, but most children (and adults) need a clear understanding of what is going on. Betty mentions coins. These are ideal for showing subtraction. Subtract £1.34 say, from £2.81. Lay out 2 £1 coins, 3 ten pence coins and a one pence piece. I made a board marked into three sections, 100's, 10's and units, and used this to separate the coins (or what ever aid we were using). Now take four pence from the one coin. You can't, so you physically have to take one of the ten pence pieces and change it for ten ones. Emphasise that you are not making the number more or less, just changing the way it looks. Spend some time discussing this point if necessary, adding the coins again to prove you still have £2.81. It doesn't matter how long it takes, because until this concept is understood the child can go no further in his understanding of numbers. Now you can carry on, taking three tens from the seven (again the child can 'see' the process as he has borrowed one of the tens), and finally the £1 coin. Don't worry if he doesn't understand straight away, but gradually the idea begins to sink in and then real learning can begin.

This goes for all maths. There is no point in doing pages of 'sums' if a child does not understand what he is really doing. You might have to try a number of different ideas before a concept is understood but it is valuable time spent. As the proverb says:

I look and I see, I listen and I hear, I do and I understand.

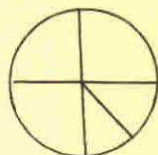
Above all, relax and try to enjoy maths. It can be as exciting as you want to make it.

My background is as a secondary maths teacher before I started to educate my children at home, some eighteen years ago. My eldest son, Tom found maths very easy and challenged many of my ideas about maths. He took O Level before it ended at the age of 12. I now have my youngest son, Seth aged 12 at home, but he is much less focused on examinations. Over recent years I have failed to refuse to help many sixteen year olds locally, either just before they take their exams or as they desperately work to retake them. Most problems that they have are down to the basics, problems with fractions, negative numbers, even subtracting what we called hundreds, tens and units, would you believe. . So they never get around to the difficult levels of the problem at all. Most have no way of visualising what is happening or any concept of what the tools of the subject mean. I am asked to tell them a trick to get the answer - in fact half knowing tricks is what is causing the problems in the first place. (As I write this, I was asked only today, on the telephone by a parent taking her child out of school at thirteen years old, how she would know whether they were at the right level. The right level is wherever your child's understanding is at the time, not an arbitrary level prescribed by the Government or anyone else.)

At risk of sounding like a tory politician, I would argue for a real grounding in the basics for all our children. They should handle concrete objects, like a bag of pennies, before learning later how to write down what they have been doing practically, when they will then hopefully be able to visualise in their head what they are doing. Shopping sums involving adding up, subtracting, multiplying and dividing sums can all be done with a bag of 1p, 10p and later £1 coins. A tin of beans at 34p and a tin of tuna at 57p can be handled by putting the money with each tin, then putting both lots together and sorting it out. Changing 10 x 1p coins into 1 x 10p is the basis of understanding carrying, and when this has been practised with the coins enough to be comfortable the child can then go on to learn how its written down and asked to remember what we did with the coins to get them going again. Also this is a free resource, when used it can be resold back to the bank and spent!

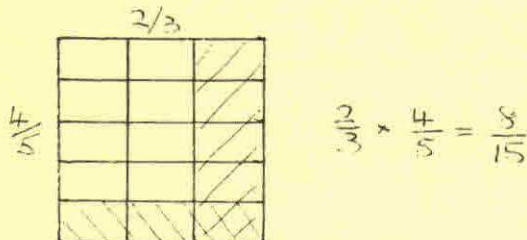
Do you have your toast in halves or quarters? or cut up even smaller and discussed what they are? My children started off like this when very small and probably still think that a quarter is a measurement of toast! All visualising of fractions beyond this needs to be of circles as $\frac{1}{4}$ circle looks like what it is. Cut up lots of paper circles in colours (plate sized). These can be cut by folding into $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{8}$ pieces and even $\frac{1}{6}$ is roughly possible. The adult can cut some fractions and have a child find out by fitting them together what they are (by how many make a whole) and how we write them. I always call my circles "cakes" - money is important to children and so is cake but numbers are usually just to keep adults quiet.

I have had a 16 year old come to me who thought that the opposite was a cake cut into fifths! How many years of confusion has that lead to? The only way to start is again!



I made a very simple teaching aid by cutting out several plate sized circles of cereal packet and cutting into fractions (several each of $1/5$, $1/10$, $1/3$, $1/6$ and $1/12$ as well as the earlier ones. Then a frame was made by cutting away a circle (fractionally larger than before) and stapling the surrounding shape to a flat piece to give a tray into which the other would fit together. This helps them to fit together well and not slip around. We investigated how 2 lots of $1/6$ fitted on top of $1/3$ and how we could get $1/2$ plus $1/3$ into slices the same and then be added up to get $5/6$. After lots of practise we got around to writing it down by referring back to what we had done. I would recommend spending time on these stages until they are fully understood before going on further in an abstract way. In fact I would go so far as to say that going on without this understanding is not just a waste of time, but downright harmful as it leads to confusion and a total lack of confidence. After a practical discussion from adding $1/4$ and $1/3$ when you have come to the idea that $1/12$ is a good choice encourage the child to think why it should be 12 when you started off with 3 and 4. Don't tell them anything just lead them to discover the link then its their understanding not yours - the time invested is worth it - be patient.

Many people think that multiplication of fractions is just a rule and cannot be made concrete. However if you have considered the idea of the area of a rectangle = length x breadth first the following is a good way. Start with a square measuring 1 metre by 1 metre hence having an area of 1 square metre, and split it as shown for the sum $2/3 \times 4/5$. The shaded areas are not needed. The whole has been cut into $3 \times 5 = 15$ rectangles each having an area of $1/15$ square metres and the required area is $2 \times 4 = 8$ of these hence the area is $8/15$ square metres.



Division of fractions is a little bit more difficult, but can be demonstrated to some extent.

Decimals is for most children not something new but something they have already used and accepted - build upon it. The child is not confused by a chocolate bar costing £0.25 introduce

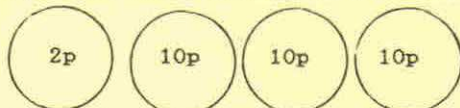
them to 1p as 1/100 of a £1. They already know how to add up two sweets costing £0.35 and £0.28 and finding their change by subtracting £0.75 from £1.00 and probably buying three icelollies for their friends at £0.50 each so they can cope with multiplication of decimals. Don't teach them about decimals like a new idea, work on what they already know and accept.

I have been surprised that so many of the 16 year old girls I come across - all compulsive shoppers and not unknown to sale bargains - have trouble with 20% off. They just accept what ever the till girl says without question. This is worrying when in national store's preprinted sale stickers declared that some socks were 1/3rd off £1.99 i.e. now 99p. Play with ideas like 'if an item is increased by 50% and then decreased by 50% will it be the original price again?' Or if it is decreased by 50% then increased by 50% will it be the same as before. My attitude is to expect calculations involving 50%, 25% and 10% to be done without a calculator in the head or on paper if necessary. Then to follow up with 15%, 27% and 56% carried out on the calculator as this forces the student to make a statement of what operations they are doing - you have to decide on which key to press. What I mean is you can intuitively get "half" in your head without knowing that you need on the calculator to press the - 2 keys (I wouldn't tell them that but lead them to discover it and have them verbalise it.

A calculator is a powerful tool that you need to learn to control and to respect. Do you know and does your child know that the simple calculators and the scientific ones (with SIN and COS on) will do the same sum and give different answers? - many people totally dependent on calculators don't know this. I recommend an investigation looking at sums like

$$2 + 3 \times 10 =$$

fed into both types of calculator. Write down what happens after every button is pressed and try to analyse what is happening. (When I thought of this sum I had the following coins in my hand and was thinking of how much they were worth).



Work on calculations like this and how to get the simple calculator to do what we mean will I feel lead to an understanding of the rules of algebra which some of us know as BODMAS but in a very visual way and the calculator checks it for us as we go along.

Again some 16 year olds I worked with - born and bred with a calculator - did not understand that sums of the type

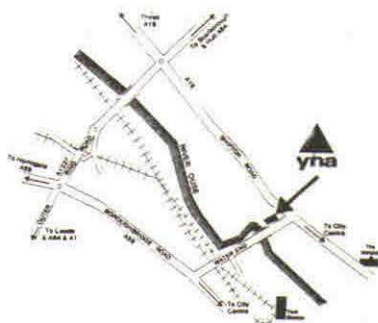
$$\frac{15 + 9}{2 \times 3} = 4$$

could not be input as $15 + 9 \div 2 \times 3$ (answer 36) as they were doing even though they insisted it said that. The 2 and 3 on the bottom line are both dividing into the top number. An understanding of this fact leads to putting the numbers in a different way to get the required answer - which comes not from learning a new trick with every new situation but from understanding what you are doing. It frightens me to see some people with calculators - it's like a 17 year old driver in a fast sports car! I would also do all calculator work first with easy numbers that can be worked out in the head first so that you know the answer before you use the calculator in each new situation. e.g. what is 72 as a percentage of 144? well it's half so it must be 50%. How do I put the 72 and the 144 in to get answer 50 on the calculator? Got it. What did I press? $72 \div 144 \times 100 =$. Right now lets try 38 as a percentage of 95. If you don't do this and have some understanding you are in danger of believing any answer that comes out.

To change the subject a little, unlike the tory outcry I can see little point in doing pages of the same kind of examples. I don't want to train my kids but to educate them. Once they have the idea and are being successful find other ways of getting the practise - as varied as possible. After a session of living as a Tudor page who would have helped to keep the accounts, we discovered tudor maths i.e. £. s. d. We got some old coins from a coin shop e.g. 3d, 6d, 1/- and 2/6 and started to do sums. It linked to something else and practised basic arithmetic with a new twist. The GCSE syllabuses may have dropped bases as a topic but I haven't we have done ladybird maths (base 6) and spider maths (base 8) with drawings of these creatures photocopied to be used. What we were practising as much as anything else was ordinary sums with a new and challenging twist. I am also a great fan of Countdown when it is on Channel 4 TV at 4.30pm and I like it most because it challenges me to be creative. My sons answers to what is 3×7 improve as well. And don't forget the maths involved in Monopoly, in scoring in Scrabble or Mah Jong - it has the advantage that while doing it you are certainly not having a maths lesson.

I would like to recommend a series of books on basic maths practise that I have used both with my own child and with my problem 16 year olds. They are said to be suitable for 7 to 12 year olds to improve their efficiency and confidence in mathematics. The series of four books 'Think and Solve Mental Maths' by Harold Clarke and Robert Shepherd, published by Cambridge Educational (about £2.50 each, I got them in WHSmiths) are basic but quite imaginative and varied. I would like to put in a plea for exercise in Mental Maths. If we could discover mental exercise in the way that we have discovered physical exercise it would be great - get your brain fit for life!!! It is worth noting that the Aural exam that is taken for GCSE is this type of thing with no calculator and it frightens calculator addicts to bits.

education otherwise



Members' Meeting

York Youth Hostel

Saturday 2nd July 1994

Arrive 10am for 10:30 until 5pm

Accommodation

Local Youth Hostels:	York	(0904) 653147
	Helmsley	(0439) 770433
Camping Barns:	York	(0904) 631346
Campsites:	Rawcliffe	(0904) 624422
	Goosewood Park	(0347) 810829
	Ashfield	(0904) 488631

Limited accommodation with local EO families:

(Tent space/trailer space, B&B)

Ring Sue on (0439 770056) or Gwen on (0904) 421982.

Places to visit in the area

National Railway Museum (free entry with EO card), York Minster, the Shambles, lots of other museums, superb art gallery and city walls to walk around.

The Agenda notification has a slightly different format this time, in the hope of increasing available information before the meetings take place.

Please contact the proposer of any agenda item and discuss it with them beforehand. This should enable you to come to meetings with more knowledge of proposals and eliminate the past experience of coming in "cold".

Any suggestions, comments or criticisms to Sue Clare (General Secretary).

Education Otherwise Association Limited

Extraordinary General Meeting

adjourned from Gilwell Park 19/3/94, reconvened York Youth Hostel 2/7/94
Water End, Clifton, York. 10am for 10:30.

Special Resolution 2: "That in the Articles of Association we insert the following clause 16: 'Decisions will normally be reached by consensus (i.e. no member making an objection). Where it is not possible to reach consensus, and an urgent decision is required, a resolution may be put to the vote.'

Before: 'At any General Meeting a resolution put to the vote of the meeting shall be decided on a show of hands...'"

Directors' Meeting (open to all) 2nd July 1994, 11am

1. Treasurer's report

Proposed Agenda for Members' Meeting (EGM) 2nd July 1994, 11:30am

1. Quorum
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the last meeting
4. Matters arising
5. Steering committee report
6. Legal Contact back-up for Scotland *Brenda Holliday* (0786) 832042
There is only one person working on this at present and more support is needed.
7. Database *Paul Lowe* (0707) 335825
Policy issues to be decided, e.g. lapsed members, reduced subs, instalment payments etc.
8. Complaints procedure *Susan Long* (0245) 421496
Further report about developing an effective process to deal with complaints
9. Reducing outlay/increasing income *Paul Bentley* (081) 852 1563
By changing to A4 format we could reduce mailing and production costs of the newsletter. By increasing our advertisers base we could enlarge our income.
10. Truancy and the effects on EO children *Jane Lowe* (0707) 335825
Producing a Children's Card, badges indicating home educated etc.
11. Future Venues *Sue Clare* (0439) 770056
Any (polite) suggestions welcome.
12. Mailshot to LEAs *Sue Clare* (0439) 770056
Lots of mail coming in to old central address from LEAs. What about a flyer advertising SINC and informing them of our current address?
13. Any other business.

Letters

Dear EO

I'd love to hear from folks in South Wales. Bethan (3½), Luis (just 2), their Dad and I have recently moved close to Cardiff and apart from the NCT, La Leche League meetings we know few others in the area. I'm pondering the idea of littlies group (with biggies too if they want) – rough aims: people to meet, make friends, maybe develop into weekly activity sessions (trips, investigations, artwork – whatever the group wants). I love loads of things but sometimes hover about not doing them! I'm at home indoors and out, try to eat and keep healthy and am the Cardiff contact for Letterbox Library (multicultural and non-sexist children's books). I'm keen to encourage Bethan's own friends (adults and children) and interests before she decides that that's what school will give her.

Please write or phone if you're interested even if your children are at school – the holidays are full of possibilities!

Julie Adams, 7 Maes y Rhedyn, Creigiau, Mid Glamorgan, CF4 8JX.



Dear EO

In response to "Can You Help?" on page 32 of Newsletter 97 (April 1994), an excellent source of material would be the charity "Survival International". Their rather infrequent newsletters have a children's section. Generally SI provides information about the current plight of indigenous tribal people that is not available through the mass media. I believe they are the most important charity in the world. Tribal people are being wiped out by big business and unsavoury governments. Please give SI a plus.

Robert Milne, Pedwardine Cottage, Brampton Bryan, Bucknell, Shropshire, SY7 0DW.

Dear EO.

Thanks first of all to Jenny Morton and her article on home educating on the Isles of Scilly. It came at just the right time as we are considering a move to the Isle of Lewis. At the moment we are trying to weigh things up and we were wondering if there were any EO families on the island already, who could write to us and let us know how they get on. If there is anyone out there please could you write to me.

Elaine Hilson, 138 Lingfoot Crescent,
Jordanthorpe, Sheffield, S8 8EB.



Dear EO.

I was distressed to read in the last newsletter (No. 97 - April 1994) about the government-supported police truant-catchers and also the harrowing quotes from people who have been suffering in the system. There is definitely a need for publicity.

The cheapest form of publicity is for members to write to their local newspaper about the possibility of home education. The technique of writing to newspapers is to respond to an article rather than to write in a vacuum, as it were. Letters responding to articles are more likely to be published. There are often articles about education or bullying, to which you can respond.

It was through EO that I learnt to write in this way, and I am now able to get frequent letters in the local paper on many different subjects. When I was actively home educating, my aim was to get one letter about EO into the local paper each year, though I must admit that I have allowed this to lapse now that my children are older.

If every member of EO aimed to get a letter about EO, including the contact address, into the paper each year, that would be a tremendous step towards allowing everyone to know their rights. School failed me when it came to written English, so it has been through EO, and the need to spread the message, that my writing skills have improved. If I can do it, so can lots of people.

Many coordinators have responded to my offer to donate my two books on school phobia to libraries, LEAs and colleges - and by April this year, libraries in the north-east of England and in the Staffordshire and surrounding areas were well supplied, as well as other scattered localities in England. I have had no requests for my books for libraries in Scotland or Wales or the London region. If you are a coordinator who has not yet donated my books to libraries and LEAs, please let me know how many you could use in this way, as I still have a quantity of books.

Patricia Knox, Pen Llwenan, Bodedern,
Holyhead, Ynys Mon, LL65 4TS.

Dear EO

With reference to the article from the Flawn Family (Newsletter 97) and your own question on whether EO needs publicity.

We feel a firm YES is required. We, like the Flawn Family, have always had to face the negative response from people who enquire about the education of our three children: "Is it legal?", "Can one do that?", "Are you a teacher?" etc.

So let us EOers educate the general public who either have children in a school or who are about to have children that yes, it is perfectly alright to educate our children out of the normal educational system.

The Croxton Clan, Maimoa, Westhill Road, Lyme Regis, Dorset, DT7 3LW.



Dear EO

My name is Sarah Martin and I've just taken over the Single Parent Contact post from Jenny Blower. I hope I shall be able to offer the same friendly support she evidently did.

I've been a single parent since my daughter Emily was born. She is now almost eight and we're in our third year of EO! When we first started it was envisaged as a short-term option, as I was intending to move. The move fell through and I then had to decide whether to send Em back to

the school neither of us was happy with or continue what had proved to be a very successful term of home education. I well remember the months of worry and nervousness about whether this was the *right thing to do!* I was always guided by Emily's reactions and the fact that she had no desire to go back into "the system". We live in a rural community and are "incomers", having moved here from the big City when Em was small. You can probably imagine the suspicion with which my radical behaviour was greeted! For over a year I felt as if I was doing something criminal or negligent but persevered in the knowledge that this *was* the right thing for *our* family.

Everyone's story is different. Some find support locally and some do not. Some families (not necessarily single parents) have a hard time of it with the LEA, the local community or even within their own families. But if we know what we are doing is right for the child(ren), and we can adjust our lifestyles to accommodate this alternative, I believe that in time other people will come to accept our conviction and will respect our point of view. This has certainly been my experience and my confidence over the last year has flourished! Hopefully I can now be there for other single parents in those early stages of deciding what to do.

Please note that Sarah's phone number was misprinted in the last issue (Newsletter 97 - April 1994). It is actually (0945) 772336. The error has been corrected in the list of officers. ZK

Dear EO,

I have managed to negotiate a discount for EO members for the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester.

Providing you book in advance and produce your EO membership card on the day they will admit one home educating parent free of charge and reduce the admission charge by £1.00 for 5-15 year olds. Under fives go free.

Well worth a visit, especially "Xperiment" - hands on fun whilst learning. Even our 18-month-old had a whale of a time. No signs sating "Don't Touch" and lots to do.

Whilst on the subject of fun Museums you might like to give "Eureka!" in Halifax a try. Situated right next to Halifax train station this is a museum purpose-built for children. Lots to do. Lots to touch.

Flush a toilet to see how it works, make a TV programme, walk through the corridor of infinity, learn about recycling and ride a bicycle and look into the magic mirror to see which bones are moving. Great stuff.

Cassie, Syeurs and Alexander, 1½ years, thoroughly enjoyed their day out and still hadn't had enough by 8pm (we's been there since 10am) and none of them were able to appreciate all of the activities as at least two-thirds of the museum was aimed at over-8's.

Unfortunately, I couldn't obtain a discount as "Eureka!" don't issue discounts to anyone and it isn't cheap - adults £4.50, children £3.50. Even

so it's well worth a visit. Avoid school holidays as the place gets packed. Happy visiting.

Beverley Young, 91 Lyndhurst Drive, Preston, Lancashire, PR2 1TB.



Dear EO,

I have been home educating my daughter Sarah (age 9) for 2 years now. Since I de-registered her from school she has changed from being ill and unhappy to being a bright, cheerful, happy child full of confidence. It took me six months to find out that she was dyslexic, something which the school had missed. So I did a lot of research, found out about EO, found a book called *The Treasure Chest for Teachers* which has many addresses of firms which send out literature and education packs for projects. I also read Prof Miles' books on helping dyslexic children and any other books I could get my hands on.

Last year though, I came across an address for a new series of workbooks which are written by three co-authors. Two are teachers and the third a teacher/speech therapist. They have many years' experience with children with specific learning difficulties or dyslexia. They use a multi-sensory approach and there is a tape with each book.

I would like to recommend these books (seven in all) to EO members as they have helped Sarah tremendously:

within a month of starting these books she was using cursive writing. She is reading much better now.

The address is Beat Dyslexia, Tuft Trees, Apperley Lane, BRADFORD, West Yorkshire, BD10 0NS.

Sharon Pollard, Rose Neath, Ingletonford, New Abbey, Dumfries, DG2 8DG.



Dear EO,

What a relief it was to hear from Avis Greenwell (Newsletter 95 – December 1993) and Sue Petsaft (Newsletter 96 – February 1994) that home education for the over-10's is not a simple extension of that for the under-10's. We have been members of EO for 22 years. We did not plan to remove our son from school – the decision was forced upon us by his distraught emotional state due to sustained bullying and the concern of his teachers that he would not "cooperate" with his academic work.

Yes, at home there have been important benefits. He is emotionally stable, calmer and much happier; he has the security of knowing that we *did* believe him and acted on his behalf; he does now cooperate and achieve more in his academic work, although this has been a long time coming. So it would appear to be "all gain" but this is only part of the story. Despite our endeavours to appear ever positive and despite acknowledging that in some ways our family unit is stronger than before, we must also acknowledge that

running alongside these undoubted beliefs are the disadvantages of having an adolescent, unexpectedly, at home every day.

Financially we are worse off (I used to work); we seldom have time on our own; there is little time to follow our own interests and the presence of our son now has to be considered in everything we do (he is only 12 years old). As regards academic work, his "cooperation" comes mainly from the one-to-one setup. I am only too aware that in reality I am "force-feeding" him. Left to his own devices he would do no academic work whatsoever. I can hear many of you saying, "Ah, well. That's the effect of the school system for you." This may well be true, but such a smug reply in no way helps those of us who are attempting to deal with the situation. We *have* let our son have a free hand in order to allow him to be "deschooled" – in no way did it stimulate any desire to take control of his education despite every encouragement and incentive to do so.

We have read with envy of the "self-motivated" child, but we must deal with the reality of a child who, although perfectly able, shows no lasting interest in any field, be it academic or practical and who, when asked what he would like to study, where he would like to visit, has no idea yet shows little enthusiasm for anything we suggest.

So, what is our alternative? Our son has no desire to return to school and little enthusiasm for the prospect of college later. I, being the one who necessarily does the teaching, am hon-

est enough to admit that I resent spending my time re-doing my O-level subjects for a child who truly doesn't want to know. However, we not only feel we would be lacking in both moral and legal duty if we allowed him to simply "loungue around the house" for the next 4-5 years but are also honest enough to acknowledge that the prospect of such a setup is particularly irksome when his being at home presents such restrictions on our own freedom. We do not have the luxury of strong convictions as to the total uselessness of the academic quality and content of schools to sustain us. We are here simply because the system failed our child and the price we pay for that failure is very high.

EO is meant to be about families, not just children. The happiness and contentment of parents is impor-

tant too and such feelings do not always come *purely* from seeing your children happy.

The support from our local group has been a great help but I know other parents of older children who feel similarly trapped by the situation.

We accept that nothing is perfect, that sacrifices need to be made yet being a loving parent who wants the best for your child does not turn you into a willing sacrificial lamb overnight. We feel that the problems of *parents* should be given more attention in EO publications and that, whilst stressing the possible advantages of home education, the down-side should be given an honest airing too. Perhaps then we would not have so many "drop-outs" at secondary level.

Lynne Fox, 240 Bishops Rise, South Hatfield, Herts, AL10 9QU.

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An exciting world to discover

Many parents would agree that children should have as much opportunity to learn as possible, and, therefore, that they should be given as much access to the world as possible. There is a very exciting resource which can provide mind-boggling access to the world, yet which most home educators are ignorant of: the Internet, a network of computers linking individuals, companies and academic institutions all over the world. Finding it is like discovering a whole new fascinating world, full of interesting information and intelligent people.

One thing that makes the Internet of particular value to children is the element of anonymity possible. A child need not divulge her age or sex or anything else that might in other contexts prove a barrier. This is one area of life in which children can escape the stigma of their youth.

One young person I know taught himself to read and write on-line. He had real motivation to learn: he wanted to communicate with individuals he "met" on the net. Another child, I heard about, aged six, had asked his teacher "How do we know what colour the dinosaurs' skin was?" to which she had replied that he should not ask stupid questions. Outraged by this unhelpful response, the boy's mother set about finding the answer to his question. She did this using the Internet. She merely "posted" the question to somewhere palaeontologists would see it. This led to her son becoming involved in an ongoing electronic mail correspondence with several palaeontologists around the world. Against that, she told me, school began to look rather inadequate.

The Internet is not just good for children; it offers much to adults as well. There are several lists and newsgroups specifically for home educators. In these, you will find everything from abstruse philosophical discussions to questions and answers about the practical details of day-to-day home education.

Many home educators feel isolated and dispirited because they know so few people who agree with them. On the Internet, such people would have no difficulty finding many like-minded individuals to provide moral support, advice, and even e-mail pen-pals for the children.

If you turn your nose up at the Internet because you feel more at home in the stone-age than the technological age, you might like to consider how environmentally friendly the world of electronic communication and information access is: all those trees saved; all that energy conserved, for example. Ultimately, the Internet is not about technology; it is about *human beings interacting and communicating with each other*.

It is always nice to know other on-line home educators, so if you are, and if you would like to be put in touch with others, please send e-mail to the Internet address below. If there is a demand, I may start a list for home educators in England. Between us, we must have a large amount of useful information.

Sarah Williams, Editor, Taking Children Seriously, 23 Whitley Road, London, N17 6RJ. Tel: (081) 808 3200. Internet: EO@williams.demon.co.uk

Coordinators Past, Present, Future and Everyone Else

I need some feedback to help me help new coordinators to fulfil their role more effectively.

It has been suggested that a contract should be drawn up for new coordinators to sign – what would be useful to include in such a contract? How would you feel about being asked to sign such a document?

How much information do new members need when they first join? Some areas have produced impressive information leaflets – is it possible to give too much help? How can a coordinator gauge how much help is needed?

What tips have those of you with experience in dealing with LEAs got?

Do you have any thoughts or suggestions on the way that coordinators are appointed. Is any method needed to persuade coordinators to stand down when their enthusiasm has waned?

Do coordinators need more support? How could this best be provided?

Would coordinators be prepared to send a bi-yearly review of how things are going in their area? Would members be prepared to send both positive and negative comments about EO and interactions with the LEA to their coordinator. In this way those concerns which may be fairly trivial can be voiced, taken note of and hopefully dealt with in a positive way. General moans would become part of a constructive report.

Isobel Bogucki (Coordinators' Secretary) – see inside back cover for address.

“The law in Scotland is similar”

Withdrawing your child from a Scottish school

It shall be the duty of the parent of every child of school age to provide efficient education for him suitable to his age, ability and aptitude either by causing him to attend a public school regularly or by other means.

If you live in England or Wales you may be wondering what's wrong with this quotation. Is it *really* s 36 of the Education Act 1944? Not quite. In fact it's the Scottish equivalent - s 30 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. Because the two are so alike (though not identical), the Scottish version tends not to get quoted at all in EO publications.

But how far does the similarity between English and Scottish law extend with respect to home-based education? Can we just say they're basically the same and leave it at that? No, not really. There are quite significant differences between the two, and this is particularly apparent when it comes to withdrawing children from school.

In England and Wales, if your child is officially at school you have a duty (now under s 199 of the Education Act 1993) to see that (s)he attends regularly. The main exceptions to this duty are absence with leave, sickness, and the existence of some other “unavoidable cause”. Apart from this, if you keep your child away from school you are breaking the law.

But under Pupils' Registration Regulation 4(a)(iii) 1956 your child must be deregistered if (s)he *has stopped going to school* and you have satisfied the LEA that you are providing appropriate alternative education. This is useful in two ways. In the first place it explicitly names “otherwise” education as a valid reason for taking your child out of school. Secondly, it implies (and this has been corroborated by case law) that you can set up your arrangements first and defend their suitability later, rather than keep your child at school while you wait for a “permission” which may never materialise.

How can you fulfil the terms of this regulation without contravening s 199? In the first place it's been suggested that the need to satisfy the LEA is itself an unavoidable cause of absence; but this has never been tested in court. Another proposal is that parents should seek formal leave of absence from the school when starting home education. But these

manoeuvres may not be necessary. Provided you make your intentions clear from the outset you have little to fear when withdrawing your child.

In Scotland, the duty to secure regular attendance is stated in s 35(1) of the 1980 Act:

Where a child of school age who has attended a public school on one or more occasions fails without reasonable excuse to attend regularly at the said school, then, unless the education authority have consented to the withdrawal of the child from the school (which consent shall not be unreasonably withheld), his parent shall be guilty of an offence against this section.

“Reasonable excuse” is defined to include sickness, but an education authority or a court may decide there are “other circumstances” which render irregular attendance excusable.

The procedure to be followed in cases of irregular attendance is set out in s 36 of the Scottish Act, which has no counterpart in English law. If the education authority think you have contravened s 35 they must serve you with a notice giving you at least 48 hours to explain the child’s absence in person (with or without the child). If you then fail to satisfy them that you had a reasonable excuse, they may either prosecute you straight away or warn you and wait for up to six weeks before deciding whether to prosecute or not. In the latter case they can make an attendance order just as if your child was not a pupil at a school.

Whether they prosecute you or not, the education authority may refer your child to the local authority reporter. This usually means a hearing before the Children’s Panel. Likewise, if you *are* taken to court, and if the court finds there was irregular attendance without reasonable excuse, it may itself refer the case to the reporter regardless of whether it convicts you as well.*

The Pupils’ Registration Regulations have no equivalent in Scotland, and the principle that you should have the time and opportunity to set up and justify your arrangements has not been established. All that remains is the stipulation (not included in the English Act) that the education authority should not unreasonably withhold its consent to the withdrawal of your

*In England and Wales the equivalent of this was, until recently, an application for a care order under s 40 of the Education Act 1944 (now superseded by s 202 of the 1993 Act). But under the Children Act 1989, a full care order was replaced in this context by a more limited education supervision order. As the Children Act 1989 does not extend to Scotland, education supervision orders do not exist there.

child from school. Unreasonableness notwithstanding, Scottish education authorities have not always been noted for their eagerness to give this consent.

Can you begin to educate at home without first getting what amounts to the education authority's permission? Can the intention to educate by other means *in itself* count as "reasonable excuse" for irregular attendance? These are in fact two different questions. When Brenda Holliday sought an opinion on the second one on behalf of EO, the barrister she consulted felt it was unlikely. However, he went on to say that

while I am of opinion that a bare declaration of intention to educate the child at home would not be reasonable excuse, the fact that the child was being afforded at home an education which was efficient and suitable to his age, ability and aptitude would, if established, in my opinion constitute reasonable excuse.

In other words, a Scottish court would probably not think it was reasonable to keep your child away from school simply because you *wished* to home educate, but it might nevertheless conclude that you had behaved reasonably if you could show that you *had been* educating appropriately!

So logically speaking, if you want to withdraw your child from a Scottish state school in order to home educate, you don't *have* to get permission first. But once the child has stopped attending regularly, the education authority is liable to serve you with a formal notice asking you to explain. At this point they may accept evidence of suitable ongoing home education as sufficient explanation. If they don't consider your arrangements to be suitable, they may take you to court, where you will have another opportunity to justify them before the sheriff. But the burden of proof will be on you, and not everyone would be happy to take this risk. Furthermore, in a number of instances the authority have brought about a Children's Panel hearing.

A safer alternative would be to seek the education authority's consent in the first place. Before giving it they would almost certainly want to investigate your proposed arrangements, and this in itself could not be considered unreasonable. But what if they procrastinate, or refuse outright? This is where the words "which consent shall not be unreasonably withheld" are crucial. In the view of our barrister, a parent *with good ground* (my emphasis) for thinking that the authority has acted unreasonably in refusing or delaying consent should seek judicial review in the Court of Session.

So if you live in Scotland and want to take your child out of school, how should you go about it? These suggestions are made on the basis of counsel's opinion, but they have *not* been endorsed by our barrister:

- Write to the education authority stating your intentions. Give as much information about your proposed arrangements as you feel able to.
- If the matter is urgent because of problems at school, stop sending your child. Explain to the authority what you are doing and why, making it clear that you are actively providing alternative education. Write to the school as well.
- Give the authority a reasonable opportunity to respond, and cooperate with them in supplying a reasonable amount of further information if asked.
- If they express dissatisfaction, ask them to explain. You may be able to negotiate to some extent without compromising your principles irrevocably.
- If they drag their feet, or refuse consent to withdrawal out of pure prejudice, you may wish to consider judicial review. Alternatively, if no legal action is in progress, a complaint to the Scottish local government ombudsman could well be just as effective.

One final word. If your child has *not* been to school the education authority may well ask you for information and it would be reasonable for you to provide it. But in these circumstances you definitely *don't* need permission to educate at home.

The text of our counsel's opinion runs to 7 pages of A4. If you would like a copy, you can get one from Brenda Holliday (Central). Please send 50p towards photocopying and postage. Brenda would also be interested to hear from you if you feel you could help in dealing with problems with Scottish authorities.

Please note that this is not a complete statement of the law. Only a minority of disputes with the authorities involve formal steps such as attendance orders or court hearings, so further discussion would be out of place here. But if it happens to you, it's important to seek support quickly. You can contact Brenda on 0786 832042 or 0786 432210.

Rob Wade, West London

"Learning"

A seminar led by Roslyn Young

from 6.45 pm on Friday 24th June to 4.30 pm on Sunday 26th June, 1994

Roslyn Young writes:

"Caleb Gattegno's major contribution to education was that awarenesses are the basic units of learning. Just as Chemistry was able to develop into the science we know today when the atom became its basic conceptual unit, so this insight into learning allowed Dr Gattegno to lay the foundations of education as a science.

As soon as a precise description of awareness has been developed, learning can be defined. It then becomes possible for anyone who has made this way of working their own to act in such a way that their teaching grows out of the learning of their students. Dr Gattegno's term for this was 'the subordination of teaching to learning' and it is one of the fundamental pedagogical principles underlying his work.

Since the best way of understanding this approach is to live it as a learner, participants in this weekend will be put into learning situations so that they can study themselves as they go about the job of learning. In this way they may come to a deeper understanding of the propositions above, and thus be helped to become better teachers, trainers and learners.

(Other areas which are likely to come up include: how we automatise, memory and retention, the role of sleep in learning...)"

The seminar will take place in Beaconsfield, Bucks, 40 minutes west of central London by car or train and close to the M40 (London-Birmingham), the M25 and Heathrow airport.

Local accommodation ranges from a Youth Hostel at £6 per night through B&Bs and a number of moderately priced hotels. Full details of these together with travel directions will be sent to you on receipt of your application.

The cost of the seminar is £50, including light refreshments of Friday evening and lunch on Saturday and Sunday, with a deposit payable in advance of £10. This will be refunded if you cancel before 10th June, and may be refunded after then at the discretion of the organisers if we can fill your place.

If you are unwaged, or would have difficulty affording the weekend for some other reason, please contact me to discuss concessionary rates.

To apply for the seminar please write to me:

Piers Messum, 112 Warner Road, Camberwell, London SE5 9HQ.

Tel: (071) 274 6306.

Similarly, please telephone or write if you have any questions or comments.

Finally, if you know of anyone else who might be interested in this seminar please let them know about it, or contact me if you would like me to send them details. Thank you.

This seminar has been recommended by Fraser Morphew, the Gloucestershire coordinator.

EDUCATING ARCHIE BY SEN ©94

NO THIS IS NOT MRS G,
SHE'S OUT JUST NOW,
THIS IS HER SON
SPEAKING,
ARCHIE.



WELL BECAUSE I
DON'T GO TO
SCHOOL,
THAT'S
WHY.



TAKE A MESSAGE?
YES. YES, I CAN
WRITE.



39

MY NAME IS
ARCHIE,

YES IT IS
UNUSUAL,
YES I CAN
SPELL
IT...



A as in AUTO-DIDACT
R as in RADICAL
C as in CUISINAIRE RODS
H as in HOLT, John
I as in INSPECTOR
and
E as in EFFICIENT
EDUCATION



THEY
HUNG
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ADVERTISING RATES

NOTICES are non profit making exchanges of educational material and information, requests for help etc. These are free to members and should be sent to the Editor.

SMALL ADS are 10p a word to members and should be limited to 30 words.

BOX ADS must be of interest to readers and will be included if there is space.

The rates are as follows;

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The following publications are available from Pat Dixon, 110 Cambridge Street, Wolverton, Milton Keynes, MK12 5AH. Prices quoted are for members only. Please add 10% of total order towards postage to UK addresses. Cheques payable to "Education Otherwise".

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0439 770056
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- Publicity Officer** *Jane Lowe*, 5 Elm Gardens, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6RX. Tel: (0707) 390070.
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- Special Needs** *Sylvia Jeffs*, 16 St Bernards Road, Sollihull, West Midlands, B92 7BB. Tel: (021) 706 6460.
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- School Phobia Helpline** *Pam Stevenson*, (0304) 210997.
- School Phobia Young People's Support** *Angela White*, 30a Field View Close, Coventry, West Midlands, CV7 9BJ. Tel: (0203) 312461.
- Subscription Renewals** Address changes and membership renewals to *Paul Lowe*, 5 Elm Gardens, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6RX. Tel: (0707) 335825.

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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
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