

Press Release Friday 23rd May 2008

Birmingham Neglect Case

The death of a child in Birmingham is a tragedy, and our thoughts are with the children who have lost their sibling. Few facts have been released about the case and, along with everyone else, we wait for the outcome of the police and LA investigations.

However, in light some of the media coverage, where home education has been mentioned, Education Otherwise (EO) would like to clarify several points.

The legal process of deregistration involves the parent writing to the school confirming that their child has ceased to attend school and is to be educated otherwise than at school. ¹

The school is then required to remove the child's name from the school role, and to notify the Local Authority (LA) that the child is receiving education otherwise than at school. The responsibility for liaising with the family then passes to Children's Services.

The Government has recently issued Guidelines to LAs that cover the process of contact and continued relationship between LAs and home educating families. ²

When children are victims of bullying in school, there is little or no support provided to them – whether the child remains in school or is removed. Our helpline receives hundreds of calls from children and young people who have been devastated by bullying. Families who deregister their children from school as a result of bullying spend considerable time working to rebuild the child's confidence and self esteem.

EO have considerable expertise in the field of home education law and practice, built up over 30 years. Our network of local contacts helps provide much needed grass roots support to families. In 2007 NFER, the National Foundation for Educational Research, produced a report ³ outlining the support that could be offered to home educators.

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EO meets regularly with civil servants who are responsible for implementing Government policy on home education. These civil servants are located in the Independent State Schools Partnership Division. At Ministerial level, home education is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Schools and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools and Learners.

Reference for Editors

1 - <http://www.education-otherwise.org/Legal/Deregistration.htm>

2 - <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/localauthorities/documents/content/7373-DCSF-Elective%20Home%20Education.pdf>

3 - <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/pims-data/outlines/support-for-children-who-are-educated-at-home.cfm>

Members of EO's Government Policy Group contributed extensively to the NFER Report on Support for Home Educators commissioned by Esmée Fairbairn in 2006-7.

<http://www.freedomforchildrentogrow.org/>

<http://www.education-otherwise.org/>

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