


~~_____~~ DCSF OFFICIAL
From: ~~_____~~ DCSF OFFICIAL
Sent: 26 October 2009 16:04
To: ~~_____~~ DCSF OFFICIAL
Subject: FW: Independent home education review
Attachments: review response.doc


review
response.doc (33 K)

-----Original Message-----

From: ~~_____~~ CORRESPONDENT
Sent: 08 April 2009 08:52
To: ~~_____~~ DCSF OFFICIAL
Subject: Independent home education review

Dear ~~_____~~ DCSF OFFICIAL

I am a parent currently home educating my children. I have attached the comments I would like to draw to the attention of the independent home education review panel. I should be most grateful if you could forward my comments to the panel, and if you could acknowledge safe receipt of my response.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

~~_____~~
~~_____~~ } CORRESPONDENT'S NAME
AND ADDRESS

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Elective Home Education Review

I have home-educated my children for the last 18 months. My daughter (14, 'gifted and talented') [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. My son (10, [REDACTED]) [REDACTED] and was bullied at school. I should like to comment on recent statutory guidance, safeguarding, and the monitoring and support of EHE provision.

1. *Statutory guidance* The guidance in paragraphs 92 and 94 of the *Revised statutory guidance for local authorities in England to identify children not receiving a suitable education* (January 2009) differs from the law it cites. I have tried to obtain clarification from the DCSF as to whether LAs should follow the statutory guidance or the laws to which the guidance refers. The DCSF have forwarded my letter to the review panel. I am concerned that inconsistencies in the statutory guidance could indicate misunderstanding of the principles underpinning EHE primary legislation.

2. *Safeguarding* Concerns have been raised that EHE children, not seen by the authorities, could be at risk of abuse. However, no evidence appears to have emerged, in the 65 years since the 1944 Education Act, to suggest that EHE children, not already known to the authorities, have been abused at all. I do not feel it would be appropriate for LAs to monitor the welfare of EHE children, partly because constitutionally LAs are accountable to local communities, not the other way around, and partly because the LA record in safeguarding children who are looked-after, at risk or being bullied in school, has been less than satisfactory. Local authorities already have powers to insist on seeing a child if they have reason to believe the child is at risk of serious harm. I see no reason why EHE children should not achieve the five ECM outcomes – indeed many parents have removed them from school because they were failing to do so. Since being taken out of school my children have recovered their self-esteem, aspirations for the future, interest in learning, and their ability to question.

3. *Monitoring* I would be happy to discuss my children's education with my local authority, but would expect the LA representative to have a good understanding of the law relating to EHE, the principles underpinning the law, how children learn, and in our case, of special educational needs. Given my children's experience in school, I am not confident that my LA has access to that degree of expertise. I would not be happy about being accountable to my LA, partly on constitutional grounds and partly because it failed to provide my children with a suitable education. In a stakeholder analysis, weight should be given to the voice of the parties with the least power and the most responsibility. In the case of home-educated children, LAs have considerable power but little responsibility. It is therefore important that LAs avoid imposing their own ideas of a suitable education on a child with whom they are unfamiliar. Case law subsequent to the Education Act 1996 gives LAs more than adequate powers to make inquiries if they have concerns about the quality of education being provided, since they are permitted to make inquiries even if there is no evidence that the parent is failing to provide a suitable education. Instead of monitoring, any concerns about suitability of provision would be more effectively addressed through provision of high quality educational resources, accessed by families on a voluntary basis.

4. *Support* [REDACTED] explain all his apparently complex learning difficulties. Previous standard visual and auditory tests had failed to detect these deficits. They are considered minor in medical terms, but have had a major impact on his educational attainment. My experience suggests that special educational needs are currently predominantly construed as psychosocial in origin and that possible biomedical causes are marginalised. Hence the government's focus on eliminating poverty, poor parenting and poor teaching, why staff in mainstream schools are currently not required to have any training in SEN, and why my son's teachers attributed his difficulties to his being 'unmotivated'. I assume this is why have been able to find little understanding of, information about, or support relating to my son's learning difficulties, either in school or out of it. I should like to see more investigation and awareness of the impact of medical conditions on educational achievement. I should also like to see local educational resource centres set up, which could be run as part of the library service and funded by per capita allowance savings made by the government when children are home educated. They could provide information about education theory and history, government policy, exams, developmental disorders, SEN resources, guides to websites, educational supplies catalogues, samples and of books and equipment, and so on. Advice clinics, training, and support groups could be available. The centres would be open to teachers, as well as parents, children and other members of the public.

I feel that our current uniform approach to education with its emphasis on core competencies, attendance and performance, militates against the diversity of knowledge and skills essential for tackling a rapidly changing social, economic and physical environment. Ultimately, I should like to see an integrated and flexible approach in education, so that people of all ages could access educational provision when they wished or needed to do so, and children's education could take place both inside school and outside it, depending on what they were learning. I trust my comments will be helpful to your review.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
CORRESPONDENT'S DETAILS