

Press Release Monday 9th March 2009

Home Educators' Petition Rejecting the State as Parent of First Resort Strikes a Chord

A petition launched following the Government's announcement of an Independent Review into Home Education has reached the top 50 most popular petitions on Downing Street's e-petition site.

Over two thousand people have signed the petition calling on the Prime Minister to remind his government that parents must remain responsible in law for ensuring the welfare and education of their children and that the state should not seek to appropriate these responsibilities.

In an interview with Ann Newstead, spokesperson for Education Otherwise, Roxane Featherstone the petition's author, said "The essence of totalitarianism is that the state maintains that it has all the answers to life and that virtually every sphere of human activity: education, the family, child welfare as well as every other area of existence needs the controlling and guiding hand of the state. All parents everywhere should be alert to this problem and resist this outcome."

The petition also calls for a halt to the Review of Home Education, launched despite the fact that the previous four consultations affecting home educators consistently supported the view that existing laws are sufficient to the task of protecting home educated children

Fiona Nicholson, Chair of the Education Otherwise Government Policy Group stated that "The existing laws are carefully framed and already provide for the local authority to take action if parents fail in their duties. If local government officers assume greater responsibilities, then the local authority incurs much greater liability."

Ms Featherstone says "Whilst the current calls for the government to impose universal monitoring for suitability of education appear to impact immediately only upon home educating families, it is actually the case that if this were to be legislated for, there would be a huge constitutional change in everyone's relationship with the state."

The number of signatories to the petition to date shows just how many parents agree and are against the increasing approach of Government to regulate rather than support them.

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Referring to calls for the Government to allow Local Authorities to assess home educating families to see that they meet the five ambitions as outlined in the Children Act, Ms Featherstone said "If the state were to insist upon assessing families for their success in meeting these ambitions, every family everywhere, schooling or otherwise, will no longer be able to determine their own ambitions for themselves."

Reference for Editors

There are believed to be around 50,000 home educated children in England and Wales.

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

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

Home Education Review Petition: <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/Homeedreview/#detail> . At time of release the petition had 2,445 signatories and was at no 47 in the list of petitions by size.

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