

Written evidence submitted by a Member of the Public

[Note: This evidence has been redacted by the Committee. Text in square brackets has been inserted where text has been redacted.]

The House of Commons Education Committee
Houses of Parliament,
Westminster
London SW1A 0AA

4th November 2020

Re: Submission: 'Home Education: Call for evidence'

1/. Background

We formally withdrew our three youngest children to Home Education from their former Primary School [school and location] in [date].

This decision followed a long history of abuse against our children and ourselves by the school, the content being detailed within, and currently subject to, our formal complaint.

Having effectively Home-educated since the middle of July, we utilised the initial 2 months to assess and address the 'gaps' in our children's education against the prescribed milestones of the national curriculum. We were shocked by the size and extent of 'holes'!

Prior to relocating from overseas in 2018, we chose that school based upon the school's academic results as published on the government's website;

[weblink]

Suffice to say, the school's published statistics [ranking of school] don't strike us as being any more genuine or credible than many of the school's statements and actions towards us during the 2 year period we were stakeholders.

2/. Comparing experiences while attending school to Home-Schooling

In addition to the many instances of physical, emotional and psychological mistreatment of our children while attending the school, which culminated in one of our sons begging us tearfully not to send him anymore, we noticed that they had 'no appetite' for anything other than 'cabbaging out', watching TV, on arrival home at about 4pm each afternoon.

Now, they are proactive and highly attentive in their studies and totally committed. They often begin their work, either on the computer, tablet or written work even before breakfast. The only 'trouble' that we have is in trying to stop them working in the evening. Other than for educational purposes, they hardly ever want or choose to have the TV on.

We hardly need to motivate them. They thirst for knowledge, and drive themselves on.

Being a class size of just three, as opposed to thirty plus, they receive highly tailored and individual assistance to their needs, immediately that they give sign that they need it.

Home-schooled families can deliver education not only for an extended number of hours each day, but also during weekends and school holidays, to suit the needs and wishes of the individual child. Further, the 'performance' of home-schooling is not impacted by Covid-19, whereas the efficiency of schools is severely restricted by the necessary Covid-processes.

3/. Advantages of Home-Education

- **Flexibility.** The school caused two of our three asthma suffering children to become extremely ill by disregarding our clear instructions in respect to their medical need to avoid exposure to cold and wet weather, sending them home to us in soaking wet clothes, no socks and wet shoes. When challenged, the school stated that it was "legally obligated to put children outside to play, irrespective of the weather". Although we repeatedly asked for that policy document "*with the words referred to by [name] highlighted*" it wasn't released.

Since being in control of the timing of educational activities, and applying a common-sense approach to their outdoor activity, none of our children have suffered asthmatic attacks.

- **Ability to control content consumed by children, and the quality of feedback received.**

While still 'attending' school, but during Covid lockdown (during [date]), we were able to see for ourselves not only the type of 'content' being 'delivered' to our children by the school, but the measure of care and attention (lack of!) in respect to quality feedback.

The 'game' 'Pier Walk' was 'made available' to our [age] daughter. In that video 'game' children answer extremely basic (appropriate to [school years]) maths questions to 'win' the ability to dress two highly effeminate gentlemen in dresses and skirts!

Then, working diligently and at a critical stage of her development, our daughter had, on repeated occasions, received ZERO feedback (*nothing at all*) on any work submitted during periods exceeding 5 calendar weeks, and then again for a further 2 calendar weeks. What 'feedback' was provided was so shallow and superficial as to be practically worthless.

During that first 5 week period, about 90 in-depth pieces of work were submitted, but only 14 'feedback' comments were received, all past-due and all very 'superficial'. As 6-7 calendar weeks constitutes **20% of the entire academic year**, it is clear the school failed our daughter – completely - in respect to the core academic content that we **did actually** want.

- **Ability to ensure that our children are not being bullied or injured.** Both of our sons told us that physical bullying was occurring within their class at school, and that one of our sons was the 'recipient'. They said that it had been happening "*right from the start*" (of [school year]) and "*always*". The school denied any knowledge of bullying within their class. There were also many occasions when either or both of them returned home with injuries, some quite severe, but in absence of any 'accident slip' to document and explain the injury.

- **Ability to ensure that our children are not being told untruths.** Both of our sons say that their reception year teacher had told one of our boys that he "*can be either a boy or a girl*". That biological untruth wilfully breached The Equality Act & Human Rights Act by subjecting our children to LGBT/gender ideology before the statutory date for RSE implementation, as well as flouting DfE guidance that schools must not promote any specific sexual ideology. The school has refused to respond to our repeated questions about this incident.

- **Ability to ensure that our children eat healthily.** Our children say that the quality and variety of school meals provided to them while previously at school had deteriorated.

Having the children at home ensures that they have the right quantity of fresh, home-cooked nutritious food appropriate to their physique and developmental needs.

4/. The law and 'protected characteristic of faith'

The ECHR, and the Human Rights Act 1998 both dictate that the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure their children receive education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions. The Education Act 1996 reinforces this by providing parents with the unfettered right to decide what they wish their child to be taught and how – again without interference by the State.

Ours is a family of faith. We claim the legal right to not have imposed on us or any of our children any teaching or ideology which runs contrary to or offends our beliefs.

Parents are, and should remain the primary educators of children, with responsibility and duty to ensure that their children are raised in such values as will prepare them for life. As long as they provide efficient, full-time education, parents have an absolute right to do this.

Attempting to impose the requirement that parents must register home-educated children and to facilitate far more frequent home-inspections interferes with that right, and has potential to be confused with a veiled attempt to mandate what children have to be taught.

At the worst case, this could become an extension of the enforced indoctrination of children at school in the LGBT ideology and lifestyle, under 'RSE', itself being offensive and contrary to the beliefs of many families of faith including ourselves. If that becomes the case in reality, we shall not comply with it even if such regulation is imposed. To do so would be counter-productive and extremely damaging to our children and to their current progress.

To impose and enforce such 'development' would constitute an intrusion into family life, contrary to the ECHR, as enacted in the Human Rights Act 1998, which provide to the individual a right of respect for their private and family life.

5/. Conclusions

We maintain that our children are not only being safeguarded against wrongful influences and physical/emotional abuses by being removed from school attendance into Home-schooling, but are also receiving a far better quality and personally tailored education.

Our children are totally committed to their education, as are we as their primary educators.

Whereas we welcome the structure of the national curriculum as a backbone on which to sculpt our approach to their personalised education, we do not accept that the enforcement of a strict adherence to the curriculum is either necessary or beneficial.

Neither do we accept there to be merit in either further regulation of approach or frequency of home visit and inspections. This would be a cost and a burden on the State when it is in any case in the parents' best interests to ensure that their children are receiving the best possible education while at home.

Consequently, we do not believe it to be either necessary or desirable for there to be a compulsory register of home-educated children, nor termly inspections.

We strongly object to any undermining of parental rights, as is currently enshrined in UK and international law, to choose without any interference by the State, the education which they believe to be best suited and most beneficial to their own child(ren).

6/. Recommendations

There is a complete absence of any evidence base supporting the proposed policy changes.

Whereas we do not believe there to be any justification (either now or at any time in the future) to impose increased government oversight and regulation onto Home-Education, we do believe that change is required, to support rather than fetter the home-schooling family.

i) Financial help to home-schooling families;

What we would welcome and applaud would be the provision of increased financial support to home-schooling families, through grants for purchase of resources, payment of exam fees, training programmes (of the parents' choice) and other means.

For example, our [personal information] sons being currently in [school year] are entitled to free school meals. Now that we are home-educating them, there ought surely to be a government-funded means to subsidise the costs of providing their lunchtime meal while at home.

Similarly, and much in the same way as the allowable tax deductions in respect to home-office workers, there surely ought to be government grants or tax deductible elements in respect to costs of heating and lighting the home in support of their educational needs, 'wear and tear' and the provision of desks and purchase of other 'school' equipment etc.

ii) Increased governmental oversight onto damaging behaviours by schools;

What we believe to be entirely necessary is the increased attention by government, DfE and Ofsted towards the damaging behaviours and practices of schools and academy trusts such as our children's previous school and trust [name of Trust] in attempt to prevent any further children being harmed.

We believe that a full 'drains-up' of the school and Trust is warranted as part of the independent investigation of our concerns and formal complaint about those institutions. This is especially the case given that we believe it is now acting to prevent an unbiased, fair and independent hearing of our concerns about its behaviours, practices and the demonstrable traumas which it inflicted on our children.

We request government intervention towards provision of an independent hearing, chaired and heard by a government sub-committee rather than non-impartial [Trust] members. We are transparent in our determination, openness and willingness to share all documentation, formal letters and complaint publicly in this regard.

[names, contact details and location]

November 2020