



What to do with Failing Schools?

Short Sunday Times article November 16th 2003 I was asked to write on the subject of "What I would do about failing schools."

Many pupils don't want to be in school; they view an extrinsically dictated curriculum in an environment of stress and alienation as worse than pointless. School children increasingly vote with their feet, each week two commit suicide.

The government's response? To criminalise parents already at their wits end and bully children with threats of care orders. The legal responsibility for education lies with the parents, even for a child in school, yet the resources for education are controlled by the state, which fails our children's needs.

If I were to suggest one policy it would be to return resources (£4,500 - £5,000 per annum per child) back to those responsible; parents, via educational vouchers. Schools, where they continued to exist, would compete for cash with other educational providers, across an innovative educational statutory, commercial and voluntary sector.

SAT's, the National Curriculum, literacy and numeracy hours all would be scrapped, and OFSTED become an educational consumer watchdog. This policy puts the onus on what home educators know works; the intrinsic motivation of children to learn, voluntarily, for their own ends; transforming our education system and returning decisions about children's education to those who know them best: parents and children.