



Letter from a Home Educated Child

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'As a self-taught teenager, I believe freedom of choice is crucial to successful learning.

I wouldn't condemn Angela Pollard's decision to return her children to school (Mail) but, despite her family's unfortunate experience, it's far from impossible for home educated teenagers to enjoy a fulfilling social life.

By my 16th birthday next month, I'll have been free from school for three years. Far from being an outsider, I feel fully accepted among friends of different ages and backgrounds. Away from the cliquy environment of the classroom, I've been able to build friendships from choice rather than proximity and I'm free to go out without worrying about homework or getting up to catch the bus.

Schooled friends frequently insist that my hectic social life is better than theirs. Being lumped in with 30 others who share your year of birth isn't an essential life experience. More vital is developing self-discipline, learning how to find help when you need it and taking responsibility for your own decisions.

These lessons will be infinitely more useful in university or the workplace than learning to raise your hand to ask permission to go to the toilet. Timetables and age-segregation are forms of crowd control and nothing to do with education. Away from the crowds, real learning can begin.

My former class mates are just embarking on their GCSE year, but with five A* and two A grades under my belt, I've been able to start A-level courses alongside preparation for my remaining GCSE's.

Young people do need to be prepared for the real world - and what better preparation is there than real life?'

Lara King 15 Herts