

What UK Parents Are Doing About Today's 'Oppressive' School System

When it comes to [exports](#), the US ranks third behind China and the European Union.

But even while it trails in the exportation of physical goods, the US seems to be succeeding in the exportation of new ideas. One of these is the modern homeschool movement. And one of the countries avidly buying into this idea is the UK.

According to [a report](#) in the spring of 2018, homeschooling in the UK has risen by “about 40%” between the 2014 and 2016 school years. A recent [essay](#) in *The Guardian* takes a look at some of the families jumping into homeschooling and finds that they have some very clear-cut – but troubling – reasons for pulling their children out of traditional school and teaching them at home. These include:

1. School is Oppressive

According to homeschooling mom Claire Mumford, traditional schools are very oppressive to children. Instead of helping children thrive in natural surroundings and activities, schools confine students to a life controlled by “desks,” “fluorescent lights,” and “computer screens.” Another homeschooling mother, Rita Ball, concurs, explaining that it felt like she and her child were in bondage to the whims of the school before they chose homeschooling.

2. School is Focused on Appearances

Experience in traditional schools has given many families the idea that it's all about the test. As Claire Mumford explains, “The system is about trying to please the people at the top,

rather than help children.” Such a system is bound to drive children toward hating learning, rather than growing in wisdom and knowledge.

3. Schools are Failing Children

Quoting the head of Campaign for Real Education, *The Guardian* suggests that the flight from schools is not because parents are increasingly crazy and ready to retreat and become hermits, but “‘because schools are failing ever greater numbers of children.’”

But parents aren’t just rejecting the negatives of traditional schools, they are also accepting the positives of home education.

1. Growth in Skills

Because homeschool children are not subjected to an oppressive schedule, they have flexibility to try other activities, such as various clubs and even jobs. Mumford’s daughter tried the latter, developing great social skills and building her knowledge while working in a local hardware store.

2. More Diversity

In school, students are grouped together with individuals just like them. But because homeschool does not have the traditional structure of school, students have opportunity to expand their horizons in the people they interact with. Rita Ball has noticed this with her children: “I do feel they’re exposed a lot more to children with special educational needs, children with disabilities, than they would be at school, in a very relaxed way.”

3. Connection with Parents

This is an obvious one, but as Rita Ball is quick to note, spending extra time with each other isn’t always the easiest thing for parents and children. At the same time, she also

recognizes that it's better than the flip side: "I don't see the space that school gives children as the healthier option.

The late author and teacher John Taylor Gatto concurred with the oppressive nature of school that these parents are worried about, [observing](#):

"Children learn what they live. Put kids in a class and they will live out their lives in an invisible cage, isolated from their chance at community; interrupt kids with bells and horns all the time and they will learn that nothing is important; force them to plead for the natural right to the toilet and they will become liars and toadies; ridicule them and they will retreat from human association; shame them and they will find a hundred ways to get even. The habits taught in large-scale organizations are deadly."

But Gatto also saw the way out of this mess:

"Individuality, family, and community, on the other hand, are, by definition, expressions of singular organization, never of 'one-right-way' thinking on a grand scale. Private time is absolutely essential if a private identity is going to develop, and private time is equally essential to the development of a code of private values, without which we aren't really individuals at all."

More parents in the UK seem to be recognizing this. Will more – both in the UK and US – follow suit and free their children from the "oppressive" system of traditional schooling?

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[Image Credit: U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Lausanne Morgan]