

Institutionalization is bad for socialization
by Rowan Fortune-Wood

According to recent UK government research by the neighbourhood nurseries initiative (A National Evaluation of Neighbourhood Nurseries¹) there is a link between anti-social behavioural problems and nurseries. The study claimed that, 'Children who attended for three days per week or more were significantly more anti-social.' To add to this,

"Further analysis suggested that, when compared with children who had been attending their neighbourhood nursery for less than a year, children who had been attending for 18 months or more were rated as significantly more anti-social." (Quoted by the BBC)

This is hardly staggering news; it is a conclusion many in the home education community reached long ago. For example, research by Dr. Paula Rothermel showed that, using standardised psychological testing, home-educated children demonstrate a higher social aptitude than their schooled peers. Research in the United States lends further backing to these conclusions; a 2005 Stanford University study, Institutionalized Early Childhood Education and Development² by Dr. David Elkind reported that,

"We find that attendance in preschool centres, even for short periods of time each week, hinders the rate at which young children develop social skills..."

Yet another report, this time by the Southwest Policy Institute, adds further credence to the view that pre-schooling is disadvantageous for children, saying,

"Contrary to common belief, early institutional schooling can harm children emotionally, intellectually and socially, and may later lead to greater peer dependency."²

As Dr. Paula Rothermel's evaluation suggests, these social problems are not limited to nursery schooling.

The Young Life and Times Survey³ claims that around thirty percent of pupils in Northern Ireland 'are bullied at 16.' The children's commissioner for England, Professor Al Aynsley-Green, went even further by warning that almost every single pupil in the country is affected by bullying,

"I have had hundreds of in-depth conversations with children since accepting this post, and I can tell you that the one thing every child I have met has been affected by, with virtually no exceptions, is bullying."⁴

With this level of emotional and physical abuse occurring in schools, coupled with the negative effects pre-schools are demonstrably having on later behaviour, the notion that home education is harmful to the social development of children seems increasingly absurd. The evidence suggests that it is institutionalization that poses the greatest threat to the emotional and social development of the young – not their families.

1 news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6525039.stm

2 www.universalpreschool.com/news/research.asp?author=David+Elkind%2C+Ph.D.%2C

3 news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/6410657.stm

4 news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4433460.stm