

## QUESTIONNAIRE ELTERNLOBBY.CH (SWITZERLAND) FOR ECNAIS MEMBERS

The elternlobby.ch stands up for the rights of parents of school choice for all and educational diversity and freedom of education in Switzerland. The association is politically, religiously and educationally neutral. [www.elternlobby.ch](http://www.elternlobby.ch) info@ elternlobby.ch +41 61 711 96 84

## England

### 1. Types of Schools:

State schools....about 90% of pupils. These include most religious schools, such as Catholic or Anglican schools.

Independent Schools....about 10% of pupils. These may also include some religious schools.

“Free Schools” .....this is a new concept and accounts for only a small percentage. They are still basically state schools but have a wider autonomy.

Others....there are some Steiner and Montessori schools which do not come into any of these headings....but are more like Independent schools.

### 2. Curriculum and evaluations:

The National Curriculum is determined by government and is at present undergoing considerable change. Michael Gove is upsetting much of the teaching profession. Though he is right to try to improve the academic rigour of our education and curriculum, he cannot expect to return to the same parameters that we had 30 years ago!

The National Curriculum is detailed and expected to be closely followed.

State schools and free schools all have to follow the National Curriculum as set out by the government, though the Free Schools can vary it a little more than State schools.

Independent Schools can run their own curriculum. In practice, most follow the National Curriculum in outline, as the public exams are based on this. However, the Independent Schools have a much wider range of curriculum and usually teach way beyond the limits of the National curriculum which they consider to be too limiting.

Evaluation is partly through exam results....and here the Independent Schools as a whole, are way ahead of the State schools....though there are some excellent State Schools and some poor Independent Schools.

There are Inspections of schools. State Schools are inspected by OFSTED on a regular basis and the results published.

Independent Schools have the Independent School's Inspectorate and are also inspected regularly and the results published. The two inspectorates work closely together.

Schools that fail an inspection are normally given a short time to put matters right and are then re-inspected. Failure then results in the school being put under “Special measures” or even closed. For an Independent School the same applies, but the Independent Schools associations would take early action and provide much advice and support.

In Independent Schools the freedom of education with regard to Religious, philosophical or pedagogical matters is very wide...provided that they do what they advertise in their brochures, and that the children are seen at inspections to be well educated and cared for.

(Some problems encountered recently with extreme cases such as some Islamic Schools).

### 3. Financing

State Schools are entirely funded by the state

Free schools are also funded by the State.

Independent Schools receive NO funding at all from the State and are entirely dependent on fee income from Parents. This has the major drawback of making these schools available to the wealthy and therefore, selective by income. However, most Independent Schools are aware of this as a problem and have considerable Bursary Schemes to allow able children whose parents cannot afford the fees, to attend the schools.

### 4 Parental rights

Parents can choose whatever type of school they wish....but often this is limited by the ability to pay Independent School fees, or in the case of State Schools, to be able to buy a house in the catchment area of a good and successful state school.

Where there are not enough places for the children applying to a State School, it is often “a lottery” as to who is taken and who not. Siblings will normally be given a place.

Those not accepted will be taken by Bus to a nearby alternative. It is usually the municipality that has the responsibility, in consultation with the schools, to decide the intake.

In Independent Schools, entry is very variable. Many are highly selective and children have to pass a rigorous exam for entry...others are totally non-selective and it is a case of first come on the list. (I know of children who have been registered before they were born!)

Most schools, both State and Independent, usually have parents on the governing board and often an active parent’s committee as well.

### 5 Home schooling

is allowed. Parents require no teaching qualifications and there is virtually no control over curriculum or the learning of the children. Parents CAN ask for someone to visit and evaluate progress but this is not required. Parents do not even have to register that they are home-schooling their children. The result is that the education these children receive is extremely variable.....and in my opinion, often totally inadequate. ( I have some knowledge of this as my four grandchildren have been home-schooled to the age of 13 or 14 and I have met a good number of other home-educated children through this)

There is NO funding available to home schooled children.

Further notes:

The government has been very concerned with the problems of "Social Mobility".

How do children from poor back grounds rise to succeed in competition with li those from affluent backgrounds?

Results from Independent Schools are some much better than those of Sate Schools that 70-80% or so of places at top Universities go to children from Independent Schools. The government is trying to force the Universities to accept children from Sate Schools with lower results than those from Independent Schools.

This was also the rationale behind the "Free Schools".

This was to allow groups of parents or teachers...or other bodies such as religious groups, to set up schools funded by the government but with more freedom to administer the schools themselves, appopint their own staff etc. The idea was that these could be set up in areas where the schooling was less good. In fact, it is groups of middleclass parents who have set up the schools, often in relatively affluent areas, and for their children and the children of their friends. It has not therefore, for the most part, achieved the government's aim.

It is worth pointing out that the top Independent schools now charge somewhere in the region of £22,000 per year in fees for a day place and around £34,000 for a boarding place. Clearly, less prestigious schools charge substantially less, but these fees are met out of income, after tax....and so, after having paid the contribution to State education.