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Ex-Brethren members speak out over rules

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FORMER members of the religious sect that has taken over a Heaton Mersey school have spoken of their disgust at the way the group allegedly splits up families.

Last week, the Express revealed that the site of a former Catholic primary on Didsbury Road has been taken over by the highly secretive Exclusive Brethren.

As a result, Mereside Education Trust, a small independent school of 60 pupils, moved into the former site of St John Vianney primary in January.

But former members of the Brethren, which bans TV and is described by some as a "cult", say the group forcibly breaks up families by shunning anyone who leaves.

David Shorto, who left the Brethren with his wife and daughters in 1981 after being ostracised for watching the royal wedding on TV, says he has had no contact with his siblings or parents since - despite them only living round the corner.

Mr Shorto, of Abingdon Road, Bramhall, said: "I think the whole thing stinks. I don't suppose their base philosophies have changed - they're the church, and everything else is an error.

"They have no interest in anything other than themselves.

"I've got five siblings, most of whom live in this area, and they will have no contact with me at all. I wasn't even told when my parents died."

And international website Peebs.net, a forum for ex-Brethren members, also got in touch with the Express. The website campaigns against the splitting of families - known as Separation - that can be caused by the group's exclusivity.

They pointed out that the group's beliefs should not be confused with evangelism, or right-wing Christian fundamentalists either, describing Separation as "sick", and adding: "They are in a self-made category of their own making and choosing."

Other people who read the story online were also vocal in their criticism of the sect, posting messages on our website.

One, calling themselves 'Lyn Parry', said: "The EB have a way of getting what they want and they have the money to do it with.

"No Christ in this religion. More wanting to get out that stay in, but can't because of family ties.

"Plenty to keep people in too, security. If they leave they lose everything."

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