

Liz Morris  
Mother first,  
closely seconded  
by 'teacher'

I hate my school. My husband only dislikes it. That's because he doesn't work there, although he does have to listen as I recall the daily horror stories. Our children don't like it either; they hardly ever see me. If they do, I'm too busy to play because of all the marking. Consequently, they see me as that shouting, nagging mother who is forever screaming, "Be quiet! Play somewhere else. Don't breathe, do not pass go. Do not collect #200!"

I've worked on and off at the Comprehensive for nearly six years. Mostly 'on', I hasten to add, although it was only two terms ago they decided to make me permanent. Five years on 'supply' makes you live on a 'hand to mouth' existence, especially on a Scale I salary! With my husband being a Postman at the time I was on 'supply' we weren't exactly living the life of Riley! My new found permanence, although giving peace of mind (well, nearly) financially, has created so many new problems it's a wonder I have time to exist, let alone live.

Mainly, I suppose, the marking is the most meaningless and thankless occupation. Teaching English for half a timetable when you're really Drama man, is not only time consuming but downright demoralizing. The kids generally only want to know their grades or marks and rarely look back over their mutilated efforts which are usually bleeding red ink by the time I've finished. There's a lot of controversy about marking. We're told that, "the child does not like his carefully prepared work sliced to pieces with the red pen". If you do it in pencil, they rub it out. If you don't mark it at all, you're accused of not paying enough attention to it. You can't win!

We've just introduced or rather re-introduced a prize giving day. I think it's just been discovered how much children respond to rewards. Unfortunately, there isn't such a system for staff. It would appear generally that in our school anyway, that the more you do, especially in the line of pastoral care, the less you are likely to succeed or be rewarded for your efforts. I am not authoritarian in my approach and I do believe I should care for the children and teach them but from looking at many of the recent appointments for various positions of responsibility it would appear that unless you can "read the riot act" every minute of the day, you've basically had it! And by the way, if you think the children should attempt to enjoy themselves, forget it. God forbid that pleasure should be included on the syllabus.

No time to scribble any more, the marking calls.

Yours,  
Disillusioned!