

Having a son of twelve years and a daughter of eight years, education is a very important issue in my life, and has been since the first child started school. I know I was not educated enough to teach my children at home, so the responsibility was mine to choose a school which I thought would be the one the child would choose if old enough to decide.

Education has changed since I was at school. My children are spared the eleven-plus, something which I felt made all the non-passes look like doomed failures and were treated as such in secondary schools. I always wondered why grammar school kids were taught to read and play music and I was not. My music lesson consisted of all four verses of 'Cherry-Ripe' and then hymn practice. My son, who is now a first year at a comprehensive school, is learning the violin, so, to me, this is an improvement in education. I like the idea of a pupil who is not very bright at Maths and English proving to the world he is not a complete idiot by positioning himself first at Orchestra in the end of term exams. Girls seem to be getting a better deal now; they are taught metal and woodwork, an area only boys were once considered as suitable pupils. I also seem under the impression that girls are no longer educated along the lines of, "One day you will get married and live happily ever after." I hope I am right; I like the thought of my daughter thinking she can, if she wants, do something else with her life. That decision will be hers! The only two faults I have with the boy's school are, one, they have no cookery lessons, and secondly, the same form of punishment as when I was at school exists - if one pupil 'played up' the whole class stayed in for detention after school. I could never, and still can't see the reason why all the innocent pupils had to suffer and I feel that it can cause frustration and hatred.

When the time comes for selecting subjects for 'O' level examinations, five subjects are compulsory. I think it should only be three: Maths, English and Religious Education, therefore giving more time to the chosen subjects, and getting higher grades. I shall encourage whatever subjects my children select so that whatever they choose to do with their lives will be entirely their choice and I will not, or want anyone at school to try to mould them into something they do not want to be. So many boys in years gone by have been cultivated into getting a job with a pension. He spends his whole life working for this but inwardly regrets he was not able to fulfil his dreams. In educating young people we must be careful not to make them into someone we once wanted to be ourselves or into someone who we can proudly boast about to family and friends.

I would like to conclude by writing a little verse which was something I loved to do as a child but no-one ever encouraged. My ambitions were suppressed.

#### Your Life

I gave you life, my little ones  
And Life, yes, Life is yours,  
I have some time to share with you  
And all your hopes and dreams.  
I will not possess you and your life,  
Your freedom you shall have,  
I only hope the things I did,  
When you were very young,  
The choices I made in your lives,  
Have been the better ones.