

Mr and Mrs Williams
Parents

Dear Robert,

You asked for our honest views on State education for you to include in your latest exhibition you hope to put on in Plymouth in September. You will appreciate that I could describe the State education system in one colourful paragraph, but will endeavour to instil a little more detail in order that you might at least be given an insight into what appears to be an ongoing saga of pure frustration on my wife and myself as parents and also on my son Justin. My wife has also included her own profile on Justin's education to date, so our "collective views" are summarised in the following paragraphs:

1. It would appear to us that it is the intention of State education to reduce people to "clones" ignoring completely the less able but "creaming off" the very best.
2. It would also appear to us that whilst the new Education Act states that it is the right of every parent to choose which school their children will attend, and to expect all available resources to be made available to meet their children's needs, in fact the reverse is true.
3. Parents, it is said, can contest the decision of the Authorities who are refusing a child admittance to a particular school. This is fine if you've unlimited money to spend and a competent solicitor. First try doing it without! My wife did and had to suffer appearing at a tribunal where she was made to feel like a criminal.
4. State Education is said to prepare children for life, enabling them to contribute to society and to get on with people.
Our impression is that State Education will ensure that children's expectations are curtailed, ambitions discouraged, any flame of interest extinguished and to expect no help for any children with various learning difficulties.
5. State Education is supposed to instil discipline, self respect and courtesy into its pupils - what a joke!, just stand outside any comprehensive school at leaving time and try to identify any of the above qualities; it's more like a cattle stampede.
6. The fallacy that large comprehensives have better facilities which can be made available to more children, may be, but what's the point of better facilities with less teachers and in some cases less able teachers or teachers who are more interested in what they can make out of teaching instead of what they can put in.
7. If you can afford it, you can put your child into a school that has classes half the size of the State schools, choose the style of teaching and behaviour, whether you want "free expression" or strict discipline. No matter which style is in fashion or politically desirable at the time, what the State has to remember is it is OUR child.

Kind regards,
K. M. Williams