

# YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT?

School has been called many things, from a school laboratory to a factory. But it is also a battleground in which the views and ideas of government, education experts, teachers and students are often in conflict. The issues are numerous, varying from the representation and respect of ethnic and religious minorities to diametrically opposed teaching methodologies, from the right to self-expression and freedom of thought to the need for order and discipline. You got a problem with that?

Pre - reading

What kind of atmosphere do you think a school should provide? Choose from among the following expressions or add your own ideas:

creative	relaxed	efficient	disciplined	chaotic	friendly
repressive	hard-working	liberal	helpful	cooperative	stimulating

Reading & Writing

Read the opinions expressed by the teachers and students below. Who speaks about:

issue	name
• testing as a teaching aid	
• the problem of bullying in schools	
• the limitations of the school curriculum	
• the need for technological equipment	
• wearing a school uniform	
• type of food available in school canteen	

**Marian Temple (art teacher), London:** "We have excellent facilities at our school, from state of the art computer labs to a video production studio. It's a pity that such equipment is only available in expensive public schools and not in the state system."

**Ryan Norton (4th form student), Glasgow:** "It's annoying having to wear a boring uniform to school, especially the tie. There's not much room for self expression. Why should I have to look the same as everybody else when I could be impressing the ladies with my Stussy and Tommy Hilfiger gear?"

**Dr. Stephen Brittle (headmaster), Cardiff:** "One thing I do approve of is the change to regular and rigorous testing in Britain. Students need to learn self discipline and they also need to have clearly definable goals. It's the only way of getting them to do any work. Fear, as they say, is the great mover."

**Aruna Aspara (2nd form student), Birmingham:** "It's really hard finding something decent to eat at lunchtime in our school canteen, especially if you're a vegetarian like me. You're lucky if you can find one vegetable, the rest is all chips and burgers swimming in a sea of grease."

**Ben Nugent (6th form student), Dublin:** "I come from a Protestant family but since my family moved to Southern Ireland I've been going to a mainly Catholic school, where there's a lot of resentment because of the Troubles. I think most people have accepted me now but there are still one or two bullies who make my life a misery."

**Alice Coleman (English teacher), Detroit:** "Teaching in a school where most of the students are Afro-American I think I should devote more time to teaching black writers, whose experience the kids can identify with. But at the same time I've got to prepare them for the SAT's, where most of the literature questions refer to white authors."

### Speaking

Describe their particular view on each issue.

What do you think about the issues they talk about? Do they apply to your school? Discuss with your friend.

### Reading

Read about 3 students talking about the improvements they would like to make in their school.

**DANNY**, 6th form: "Improvements? I think the size of classes and also the way the classroom is organized. For start, there shouldn't be any more than 20 pupils in a class. The way it is now it's just chaos, you're lucky if you learn anything with all the noise. Another thing, like I said, is the way we have to all sit at separate desks facing front. It would be much better if we all sat in a circle. That way we could all see each other eye to eye, there would be more room for discussion and also less disruption. You're less likely to act like an idiot if everybody can see you."

**LINDA**, 4th form: "One thing I hate about school is the number of tests they make us do. I'd like to have more creative projects, not just mechanical learning of some set of useless facts you're only going to forget the minute the exam's over. I have a penpal in the States and she says that her class get to make videos, put on plays and do multimedia presentations for subjects like English and History. Learning should be fun and constructive."

**JOSIE**, 5th form: "I know this isn't going to make me very popular but I think that boys and girls should be split into separate classes for science subjects where there's a strong practical component. Usually what happens in these classes is that the boys, thinking it's more *their* thing, take over the running of the experiments while the girls mostly just stand by and watch. I think that this is one of the reasons a lot of girls don't like science or think they can't do it. If we had our own space without this kind of competitive attitude boys have, always wanting to control things and show how in control they are, we would be able to apply ourselves more and I'm sure we'd end up with better results than them."

### Writing

Connect each student with his/her ideas: Danny (6th form), Linda (4th form), Josie (5th form)

- a. There should be more creative group projects - \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Boys and girls should be split during science classes - \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Students should sit in a circle - \_\_\_\_\_
- d. There should be fewer tests - \_\_\_\_\_
- e. There should be fewer students in a class - \_\_\_\_\_

What are the reasons for their suggestions? Do you agree with them?

What would you like to improve about your school?

### Speaking

Does your school have rules about timetable, clothing, behaviour in class and so on?

Do you think strict discipline is fundamental at school? Why? Can you think of other ways to achieve the same results?

## DICTIONARY

battleground-bojno polje; issue-tema, problem; numerous-brojni; varying-različiti, od do; minorities-manjine; diametrically opposed-krajnje suprotno; self-expression-osobno izražavanje; provide-omogućiti; repressive-nametnute; teaching aid-nastavna pomagala; school curriculum-nastavni plan i program; facilities-školski objekti; state of the art-najmoderniji; gear-oprema, odjeća; rigorous-strogi; goals-ciljevi; decent-pristojan, zadovoljavajući; grease-masnoća; resentment-zamjeranje; the Troubles-naziv za sukob između protestanata i katolika; devote-posvetiti se nečemu; facing-okrenut; disruption-ometanje; practical component-praktični dio; to apply-uključiti se; fundamental-bez kojeg se ne može; achieve-postići