

My dislike of school and everything about it was recently intensified when last year I failed my English Literature 'O' level. Perhaps I could have tried harder and perhaps we could have been supplied with a teacher who was capable of teaching.

Our teacher, let me call her Miss P., who thought a fun lesson consisted of nail-biting decisions as to which stars of 'Eastenders' could be potential 'Macbeths' or 'Macduffs'. However, not one question did the Oxford Delegates set on the suitability of Dot Cotton to play one of the Three Witches.

In my mind, Miss P. was the reason for my failure so, in an attempt to rebel against her and the educational system itself, two friends and I happily let her tyres down and hoped like hell that she would crash. She did not. But I retook my examination with renewed determination. I shunned any help from other members of staff. I wanted to show them that I did not need them and could do it alone. Afterwards, I felt a sense of superiority and satisfaction when I passed.

There have been many other times at school when I have felt the urge to be inconsistent and to fight back. When I was younger and impressionable I felt secure within a methodical, setpatterned atmosphere. Nothing went wrong and no-one stepped out of line. But as I began to grow, I formed my own opinions and refused to become a quiet, model pupil who would prove to be a trouble-free and steady worker.

I detested the way that four hundred young ladies had to file, in silence, into assembly, all clad in navy blue and white, in skirts with the right degree of flare and jumpers with the correctly shaped collars. In my opinion, uniform is an institution that restricts a pupil's imagination and creativity. If a set uniform has to be worn, then in my experience, great pains will be taken to make that uniform as different as possible.

However, even if strict rules did prevail at my school, my friends and I staged many attempts to fight back at the rules. We picked the white stripes out of our ties with compasses, we tied our shoe-laces backwards, we stuck pieces of plastic on our noses with glue to look like imitation nose-studs and on one memorable occasion, the whole fifth year put infant-like pony-tails in their hair. We revelled in the attention we so desperately desired.

After all of the successful rebellions, staff told us that if we wanted to be treated like adults, then we must behave like them. What a hypocritical statement, thought I! How can we fulfil their requests when they speak at us all day, when we are made to sit on the floor in the hall, when the heights of shoeheels are carefully monitored and when the lemonade shandy in the canteen was banned for fear of pupils becoming intoxicated! Fellow classmates recorded the alcohol content and to our horror, and later our amusement, it was 0.2% (or some other figure equally as miniscule) per can.

The school motto is 'Non scholae sed vitae discimus' which, translated, means 'For life, not school, we learn'. Well, I thought that a school motto had to be clearly practised within a school. Certainly, teaching methods that I have grown accustomed to in the last five years, have not adhered to the motto. In my opinion, teachers tell us what they think we should and not what we, the pupils, want to know.

On a lighter note, the supposed 'happiest days of one's life' recently came to a dramatic close for the Fifth Year at Plymouth High School. It was a day that no-one really wanted to see but it descended upon us and made our five years of friendship, fun and the occasional argument seem so hastily spent. We chose to go out with a bang, causing the headmistress to stop the chosen Assembly hymn ('All things bright and beautiful') and to tell us "This is not the sort of behaviour I expect from members of the Senior School." As a rule, the Fifth Form never sing so we all thought it quite fitting if we participated in our Last Assembly together albeit far too loud!

The staff anticipated chaos, so we gave it to them. Instructions were given to everyone - one squeezey washing-up bottle to be brought, alongside autograph books and cameras. Make way for the Fifth Year Grand Water Fight! Herds of damp girls roamed around the school building, filling up any available containers with water, ready to fire! A trifle juvenile, perhaps, but meanwhile, inside the 'matured' ones were pursuing alcoholic tendencies. The evidence (i.e. the empty bottles) was disposed of in the First Year's rubbish bin!

The day came to a close, emotions were high and tearful farewells took place. Those that departed were part of many rebellions held to establish our position in school. I will truly miss all of them and I feel as if we have been deliberately dispersed to enable us to settle down sensibly and to disregard any more thoughts of fighting back. After all, it's just not the done thing for potential Sixth Formers!

When it is my turn to leave, to walk through those school gates for the final time, I'll be sorry to be leaving my fellow classmates who have kept me going when the academic 'chips' were down, but on the other hand I'll be overjoyed to be rid of the environment that has so far caused me to say nothing but bad things about it.