

From a mother's point of view, I think it is a very good idea having all comprehensive schools in the city as long as the whole of the education system is run on these lines not bits and pieces as it is now. There are many children who develop later and many children who waste their time once they have passed for a grammar school, and another child who just missed would work hard had they had the chance to go to a grammar school. They have as good an education at a secondary school but not such a wide selection of subjects to take up to 'O' and 'A' levels, they can also transfer to a grammar if they are recommended after their 'O' levels, I am lucky mine all passed so this is not written with any bitterness, but I have seen some children very upset as parents seem to think it is essential, I always told mine, "Try; that is all you can do."

As the system is now I would not like to have to make a choice of whether they sit the selection or not because they may feel later, "I might have been able to pass if I had been able to sit the selection"; I am speaking from my own thoughts about myself.

I think it is a sad job the teachers are so tied as regards discipline and punishment, I once had a ten year old say to me "I wouldn't have done it if we could still be caned". I know they have to have restrictions on the use of the cane but some form of punishment to deter the children even at primary school would help.

Some of the senior girls help at a primary school one half day a week; this gives them an insight into the problems of a teacher, also they do some community work with the senior citizens, such as shopping and cleaning for the girls, and gardening for the boys; I expect they also swop around as they seem to with everything now from sewing to carpentry, cooking to metalwork.

I am a Cook-in-charge and have seen a lot of changes in school meals. I started in a senior school and did initial training under one of the original cook supervisors and I am eternally grateful to her, she taught me so much on large scale catering.

School meals have changed a lot, the old jokes about stodgy potatoes, grizzly meat, and floating cabbage, followed by steamed sponge and lumpy custard are outdated, everything is still made on the school premises, or at least in a school kitchen, as some are still transported meals which are not as appetising as they have to stand in containers for quite a while. It is not the cook's or driver's fault, just the system.

We now do a wide selection of things the children like, such as pizzas, hot dogs, pasties, ploughmans, quiche, and such things as beefburgers, fish fingers and sausage. We also do roast meats, sometimes liver and of course fish in batter. I think it is essential that they have what I call a proper meal, e.g. a roast or liver, cottage pie, etc. We do a variety of vegetables and try to make them interesting but they usually go back to baked beans or peas, some do like cabbage though. It is not chips with everything, we have roast or boiled potatoes but no matter how hard we try to persuade them they would rather have none, so it's back to the fryer.

We do wholefoods and vegetarian meals, these are more popular with senior girls. We do a variety of sweets from dough buns to the old favourite, peppermint sauce with steamed chocolate sponge, which is one you often get asked for, another is yoghurt which is popular with all ages. It is very nice when you get requests, we usually try to oblige, even if it is only for two or three children; we do doughnuts and biscuits in all wierd and wonderful shapes and sizes, we also sell milk at break-time and lunch time and I believe the senior schools sell such things as pasties at mid-morning break.

Some schools are now having senior citizens in to lunch at a nominal cost. This serves several purposes: it gets the people out of their homes, gives them a hot meal when some wouldn't bother, and the children have their meals with them, taking it in turns to look after them. This gives them the chance to talk and look to the needs of the senior citizens, a thing that a lot of the children don't have the chance to do, being a service town, so many haven't grandparents in the city.

We have a garden plot in our grounds and have had broad beans, carrots, onions, parsnips and rhubarb from it for the meals; it has only been going for one year so will yield more as time goes on, and the children, with the help of a teacher and parents, get more interested in it. The fruit bushes are growing well, the produce couldn't be fresher as it is picked at eight-thirty and on the hatch at twelve noon.

These are my thoughts as a mother and a cook.