

Susan McCloskey
Parent

My feelings on education are very bitter ones, and I feel very angry about my own education, or the lack of it. I was unfortunate in as much as I came from a poor family and my mother's attitude to education was to "leave it to the teacher," as she had been poorly educated herself.

I went to a country secondary modern school, where class distinction was rife. Because I wasn't dressed in a nice school uniform like the other girls, I was put at the back of the classroom and largely left to my own devices.

I was a shy, withdrawn schoolgirl and lacked self-confidence. Because of this, I think that the teachers thought of me as not very bright, and didn't give me very much attention at all. As a result, I came to think of myself as being dim, and spent most of my time day-dreaming, and hated going to school.

I feel that my school days were wasted due to my parents' and teachers' ignorance. I desperately wanted to learn and to continue at college, but when my school-leaving age arrived, no one gave me any advice on how to go about it. Nowadays when I see young people leaving school and going straight onto the dole, it makes me seethe. I wish that I had been given the advice that is available now, and cannot understand why teachers do not take stronger steps to make children realise how important a good education is. Surely this is a part of their duties, rather than being more concerned about getting to their tea-break on time, like some of the teachers I have known.

Coming back to the present day, I am further disillusioned with the system. Having applied for further education courses, I am advised that if I were "living on the state" I would be fully entitled to completely free courses, but as I am self-sufficient, I have to pay through the nose for the same privilege; having, through no fault of my own, missed out on my original education. I am baffled by a system that appears to offer free opportunities to those who seem not to want it, and at the same time, discourage, by way of expense, those who keenly want to further their horizons.

I can quite understand why those who can afford the fees, choose to send their children to private schools. I don't feel that state schools are really concerned about the quality of education offered to children at present, and feel in particular that more time and attention should be spent on those children who may be considered "dim" since, by definition, they are the ones most in need of it. In my own case, if perhaps my own teachers had been a little more attentive, they might have realised something that I did not discover until years later, namely that I am mildly dyslexic. Perhaps had this situation been discovered sooner I might have enjoyed "the best days of my life", instead of feeling, as I do, that it is a period of my life best forgotten.