

Punishments don't always fit the crime

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Rajmin Ali is in Year 5 at Woodlands Park Junior School in Haringey, north

When we get into trouble we either have to stay in at break or lunchtime and write 10 to 20 lines saying 'I mustn't be naughty again' or we have to go to the head. If you've done a very bad thing he could send you home.

"Some days are bad days when lots of kids get lines. Bullying and fighting bring on the worse punishments - those kids do 100 lines. Swearing and back chat to the teacher is bad too. When a teacher is shouting it doesn't do very much.

"Once I forgot my homework book and I had to wait after break for the teacher to talk to me. Some times she is friendly and sometimes she is strict, and I do like the way she jokes around with us. When the class is noisy she says she's got a headache.

"I notice that when a teacher is shouting it doesn't do very much. Some kids are just naughtier and don't pay any attention. It's like a challenge.

"Children can become troublemakers because something could be wrong at home. Teachers should try to find out before they hand out a punishment. They should try ahead of time to get to know their pupils. The teachers were probably naughty too when they were little.

"It would help all the children if they knew what punishments to expect. Mistakes that are accidental are not the same as when you do something bad on purpose - you're not trying to hurt anyone. When I forgot my book there could have been a letter or something signed by my parents to say I had forgotten.

Teachers think that older children misbehave more than the younger ones - it's because the older kids have learned naughty things. They never knew how to in Year 2."

Toby Webb, aged 10, a Children's Express reporter, is in Year 5 at Gayhurst Primary school in Hackney, east London.

Kids can be given a really bad punishment for nothing in particular and sometimes they are punished for something they didn't actually do.

"If kids are rude, the teacher can send them out of the class. When they're swearing they get sent to the headteacher or sent to another class for a couple of days. They can't carry on being stupid then. When there's fighting the teacher usually sends them to the head and she deals with them in whatever way she thinks best. She's strict but that's good. Everyone shuts up when they see her coming.

"I think our school is pretty normal when it comes to naughtiness. Quite a few kids are bullies and fighters, but I don't think it's too bad. In my school, the worst thing to be caught for is bullying or discrimination.

"I got 100 lines in Year 4 for chucking rubbers in class. Nearly everyone was throwing them. The teacher was writing on the board and turned around and saw them flying through the air. It was probably fair punishment.

There were 29 kids in my class that year. Having too many children can cause problems for the teacher because there's so much to deal with. She can't be with the right kids at the right time.

"Girls don't get into trouble as much as boys. I tend to think that boys are naughtier.

"When you're younger, the teachers are always saying 'you should look up to the older children, you'll learn a bit more' but you also hear the teachers telling the older children that they are setting a bad example.

"Some children are kept in from their breaks and lunchtime breaks. I don't think teachers should do that because keeping kids in just gets them more wound up.

Too often the kids are told to stand by a wall or door or something. The teachers don't talk to them so they can learn why something happened. In my school, when teachers have a long talk with the child it usually works out fine. The worst punishments - like being suspended - are not as good as trying to deal with the problem. Hitting children? That should never be brought back - it wouldn't fix anything."

About the team

Interviews by editor Nurul Ali and reporter Martin Webb. This article was the first in a series of columns entitled 'Friday's Child' for the [Times Educational Supplement](#).

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