

Speech to anti-SATs campaign meeting in the House of Commons on 28/4/09

My name is Conor Muller. I am a Year 5 pupil at Benthall Primary School in Hackney.

Next year I am due to take Key Stage 2 SATs tests but I hope the government sees sense before then and abolishes them, like they did to SATs in secondary schools.

If SATs are bad for 14 year olds, why is it OK to force 7 and 11 year olds to do them?

Benthall is a very good school but every year our teachers are under pressure to drop everything else to prepare Year 6 pupils for SATs. They are frightened our school will drop down the league table and be seen as failing.

But schools are not like football teams or supermarkets and children should not be weighed and measured like vegetables.

My big brother Danny told me he didn't do any history or geography at all when he was in Year 6. I don't want this to happen to me or my friends.

I heard on the news recently that children in the UK are among the unhappiest in the world. They are also among the most tested in the world. Is this a coincidence? I don't think so.

SATs don't tell teachers anything they don't know already and they don't tell parents anything teachers can't tell them much better.

Assessment should be about helping pupils to learn not helping the government to produce league tables which force schools to compete with one another like businesses.

I am always hearing politicians on the television and radio going on about bad behaviour in schools.

Have they ever thought what causes bad behaviour? Could it have anything to do with children being labelled as failures by SATs tests? Why bother working hard and behaving well if you are told you are dumb when you are eleven years old?

Have they ever thought how boring lessons can be because of SATs and how this can lead to children messing about?

Reading stories and poems and using your imagination can be fun. Having to answer endless questions about little bits of them does my head in.

I'm lucky because my mum and dad have both been to university and know how to help me with my learning. They encourage me and tell me not to worry about SATs because I don't need them to know how well I'm doing.

There are also quiet places in my house for me to read and do my homework and my parents have got the time and money to take me to museums and castles and old factories.

Lots of kids don't have the advantages I've got – and they're the ones who often don't do so well in SATs. They're usually the ones who then get put in bottom sets in secondary school and give up on education.

SATs are stressful and SATs are unfair. All they are good for is creating league tables with schools in better-off areas at the top.

I'm really glad that teachers and head teachers have decided to boycott SATs next year if the government doesn't get real and get rid of them.

No more useless SATs!

Conor Muller 28 April 2009



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