

Kool Skool!

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Kool Skool

Patter of footsteps that echo and beat

Happy tip tapping from dozens of feet

Coats that sprawl loosely on pegs down the wall

Bright eyes that wait for the teacher to call

Children all seated to start the new day

Smiles and light hearts seem to brighten the way

Adults move round to encourage and show

Telling and guiding, so knowledge will grow

Windows that steam up from chattering breath

Tables with papers and books on the desk

Chairs that slide roughly across the class floor

Pictures and paintings and posters galore

Playtime comes quickly and bodies disperse

Running and hooting and shouts of great mirth

Teachers slip quietly into the staff cave

And gulp down some caffeine to keep themselves brave!

The morning wears on with learning more stuff

And brains become numb, as enough is enough

Then lunch break releases aromas of food

Tickling the nostrils, lifting the mood

Teachers dash to the loo in despair!

A quick bite to eat and a breath of fresh air

Then rushing about to compute or mark work

No time to relax or a meeting to shirk

A knock at the door means a problem to lick

Tommy's hit Benny and Beryl is sick

Lenny is crying and Jane is upset

Gary is pushing again, you can bet!

Lunchtime is over and sighs all around

Teachers and helpers are now to be found

Setting up lessons with limited zeal

Trying to look more alert than they feel!

Flush of excitement as children troop in

Amy is smiling and Billy looks grim

David is proud of the cut on his knee

The classroom vibrates like a gay buzzing bee

It's time for the gym, so there's no time to spare

Marching and stretching and gliding through air

Dancing with joy and exploding with glee

Faces bright red as a sign life is free

So on through the day until the bell tolls
With noises and scrambling 'til silence unfolds
A quick hug from Amy, a shy wave from Sam
Then out to the playground to greet Mum or Nan
The echo of laughter drifts in from the street
As children skip gladly in hope of a treat
And the mass of humanity fades from the scene
With pushchairs and buggies and toddlers that scream!
The teachers breathe deeply and wish they were home
But more work awaits them, they sigh with a groan
So much to fit in while the time slips away
The evening grows long as blue skies turn to grey
Much later, the hard grind recedes with the miles
Driving away with a heart full of smiles
Despite disappointments and moments of gloom
The joy and the glory shine bright as the Moon
The front door means freedom or so it now seems
Yet thoughts of the school day entangle your dreams
And visions of children whose lives you have blessed
Restore the conviction that God's way is best!

Denis Hayes (2017)

A young teacher commented:

'I get the strong impression that most people see work as a means to an end. They have a job to get enough money to buy food and clothes, pay the bills and—if there's some to spare—enjoy a few of life's

little luxuries. Now there's nothing wrong with taking such a pragmatic view of things, but those of us who are called to teach see it as more than just a job. It's a genuine vocation; you could almost say a 'calling'. We are on a sort of mission to make the world a better place by helping children to make the very best use of their talents and intellect, to stimulate their imaginations, give them confidence, light a flame and promote a sincere love for learning. We are also keen to help them develop morally and become young people of true character. So much is expected of me that I sometimes think I've got to be some sort of super-hero with an endless reserve of energy, expertise and talent; in fact, a miracle-worker!

It's difficult to pinpoint why people decide to teach. It certainly isn't the money and it can often be an exhausting, even demoralising job at times. I guess it's a mixture of reasons: a way of expressing our talents, commitment to the betterment of society, love of learning or simply a passion for children. There's no doubt that the greatest rewards are internal; I mean things like the satisfaction that comes from seeing children grasp something for the first time or watching them enthuse over the work or smiling with delight after making a discovery.

I also love to see children happy together: their excited chatter and funny ways are like therapy for me. It's great when a child or parent thanks you sincerely for something special you did with the class or with a group. When we have fun together—perhaps doing drama or practising for an assembly or playing games on the school field or just doing something slightly daft—it brings a thrill that can't be measured or recorded on an assessment sheet. Only people who have experienced this level of happiness can fully understand what I mean.'

Self-worth and attitude:

There are a number of factors influencing a teacher's self-worth and positive attitude: (a) General competence and skills (b) Gaining approval from significant others, such as parents (c) Receiving support from colleagues (d) Being convinced that teaching makes a positive difference to children's lives (e) Strong moral convictions, including religious faith. A mysterious contradiction exists in that teachers often seem to be complaining about the unreasonable demands placed on them, yet they continue to love the job, which suggests that altruism and motivation to work with and help children outweigh self-doubt.

Extracts taken from *Foundations of Primary Teaching* (Routledge 2011) by D Hayes