

IT WILL PASS

We may well be deprived in this country by the lack of coins in circulation but we will not have forgotten or dismissed a simple fact about coins – coins have two sides to them. We cannot have a coin with one side. The obvious and logical extension of that fact is that for every winner there has to be a loser. That sounds harsh but it is a reality. For every interview, someone is offered the job and someone else is not. For every sporting league, some are promoted and some are relegated. Where there is victory, there is also defeat; where there are passes, there must be fails.

That fact often seems to be forgotten by parents, in particular those who expect a school (and, by implication, every school) to have a hundred percent pass rate and those who expect their child (and, by implication, every child) to pass all their examinations. While we are so obsessed with such a view, we are perhaps ignoring or just not seeing that one crucial, important point raised in the paragraph above. That fact is that there are two sides to a coin. In short, we fail to recognise that some children will pass and therefore some will fail. In fact, we have to go further than that, some children must pass and some must fail. We do not say that in a spiteful sense but the fact is that every examination has a pass mark, even though the pass mark may not be fifty percent as everyone seems to think. If the vast majority of pupils sitting an examination were to gain marks well above fifty percent, the pass mark will go higher. Examiners set examinations in order to have a 'spread' of marks – it would not be deemed a fair, true or accurate examination if everyone passed.

This should not come as any surprise to us. In a sporting league, a team may play brilliantly throughout the season but the results will eventually dictate that a few teams are relegated to a lower division. The relegated team may well have beaten the teams in the top six of the league, they may have played some amazing soccer, scored some incredible goals, entertained the fans constantly, but overall, depending on the number of points gained, they may be relegated. They may only miss the safety of staying in the top league by one point – they may have gained more points than other teams in other years, but the simple truth is that the three teams with the lowest number of points (it does not matter how many or how few points) go down.

Many readers, even those who are desperate for their children to pass their examinations, will have gone through job interviews, maybe even many interviews. The majority of us will have not been offered the position but it would be ridiculous to suggest that we did not 'pass' the interview. There is no Pass or Fail in interviews. We are either offered the position or we are not. If we are not offered the position, we are not being told we are stupid, useless or incompetent; we are not being told we will never get a job. All we are being told is that the employers were looking for someone else, someone with different character, abilities, or experience. Another candidate fitted the bill better, was more suited to the task anticipated or matched the desired profile at that time.

It is the same with Assessments that schools may make to assist with entry to the school. There are assessments but there are no Passes or Fails. A child may do really well in the assessment but may not be offered a place at the school, for any number of reasons. Places are limited or are offered to pupils fitting certain criteria that the school can cater for. Pupils are either offered a place or they are not, the two sides of the coin. It is saying nothing about their future or their ability.

Not every child will pass but he must remember that it will pass. All things will pass - the good and the bad, the smooth and the tough. It is good to remember that the good things (the praise) for all of us will pass one day, which should keep us from being big-headed, while at the same time we will do well to remember that the bad things (the problem) will pass as well, which will help to keep us from being down-hearted. Our poor examination result, our school's low pass rate, our team's relegation season, our unsuccessful interview, they will all pass. Next season may be different; the next interview may well be different; the next examination may well be different. A child's future is not determined by the toss of a coin, or indeed by what side of the coin comes down. Hopefully the need to forever be explaining that Pass Rates are not important, significant or relevant will pass one day as well!