



## THE ASSOCIATION OF TRUST SCHOOLS (ATS), ZIMBABWE

*"Empowering relevant, high-quality, holistic education in member, non-profit independent schools"*

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Dear ATS parent

### JUST ASK JOHNNY!

There is a story about a new teacher who stood in front of his class and (unwisely) asked the pupils, *"Anyone who thinks he or she is stupid, please just stand up."* After a short while, Johnny looked around and stood up. The teacher turned to him and asked him, *"Do you think you are stupid, Johnny?"* Johnny replied, *"No, sir, but I hate to see you standing there all by yourself."* Smart young man! Even if Johnny is not necessarily academically gifted we can see his logic, which is not always the case, it may be said, when we look at parents. Please let me explain before you shout me down.

Every parent (obviously) wants their child to do really well at school; every parent wants their child to be an A student; in fact, it is almost the case that every parent demands their child will be an A student. There is an expectation among some parents that if I pay such large school fees for my child's education (or if I send her to extra lessons, get her lots of homework, ensure the school gives practice tests) then she will come out with straight 1s or A\*s. Parents look at school league tables and wonder why their child's school is so low in the league when they are paying such large sums of money. Let us just think about the logic of that (leaving aside everything else the school is offering).

If we think that every school must get straight A\*s, then it follows that every child must get straight A\*s and to do that my child (without question) must get straight A\*s. However, if we (grudgingly) admit that not every child will get straight A\*s, what makes us think that our child must get straight A\*s? We are saying, if we go by this logic, that with the same opportunities, teaching, resources and facilities every and any child will do well academically.

If we do think on such lines, then we need to consider how the same logic must be carried through, across all aspects of life. It means that every child can succeed at the highest level in sport, in fact, in all sports (and do so while all the time getting those straight A\*s). It means that every child can (and will, if given the right conditions) also play a musical instrument (in fact, all musical instruments) brilliantly, while still getting those straight A\*s and playing sport at the highest level – if they can gain the top grades in academics then they must be able to do the same in any or indeed all of the other areas, to which we still have to add drama, public speaking, debating, chess, First Aid..... In fact the same logic implies that all children should be six feet tall with a perfect figure! Oh, and it also means that every parent will have (or should have) got straight A\*s!

If all of that does not apply, then no part of it applies. So what can we take from all of that? Of course, we all as parents want our child to do really well academically but reality (let alone logic) shows that not every child will get straight A\*s, or play for their country, perform in orchestras and so on. And if that is the case, then it may well be that my child will not gain such results. Some children will not do as well as others – after all, how else would we get pass marks or sports results? The fact is though that it is not the end of the world. We must just be realistic and logical and maybe think along the lines of Jack Handey who said, *"Before you criticise someone, walk a mile in their shoes. That way, you'll be a mile from them and you'll have their shoes!"* Smart thinking again! Come on, let's be smart; just ask Johnny! Let us just help our children think for themselves to the best of their ability and delight in whatever progress they can make in all areas of their life.

For further thoughts on the matter consider the article on the ATS website entitled, "Let Them Fail" on <http://www.atschisz.co.zw/category/parents-articles/>

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