



Letters

Reclaim the streets for our children

The Guardian, Friday 12 October 2007

Our children may not be as dependent on TV, computer games and

[f Share](#) 0

[t Tweet](#) 0

[e Email](#) 0

[in Share](#) 0

[✉ Email](#)

[📄](#) [👤](#) [🔗](#)

[Article history](#)

[More letters](#)



mobiles as adults fear - as long as there is a more interesting alternative (Study reveals stressed out 7-11 year-olds, October 12). Last week I took 25 year 5/6 children from Wembley to an outdoor education centre in Hampshire. In a packed programme of environmental education, canoeing, trim trails, paddling in fords, night-time torch games and independent play in woodland and meadows, not one child mentioned missing TV or other techno-entertainment.

Evaluating the programme, children spoke about learning to try food they had not eaten before, facing fears and being brave, becoming a stronger person, learning to be alone, taking responsibility for looking after themselves, and discovering that "nature is good and all around us".

As a result of their studies the children all made pledges to reduce their carbon footprints - a small step but one that enables them to do something practical about the impact of global warming and overcome their feelings of helplessness.

But children's "free range" activities should not be restricted to one residential trip during primary school; we need to take a leaf from the 1970s women's movement and start a campaign to reclaim the streets - this time for our children.

Martin Francis

Wembley, Middlesex

The Primary Review echoes Unicef's report on child wellbeing in February, which ranked the UK bottom in a measure of young people's sense of wellbeing. This is certainly cause for concern.

On an encouraging note, the report records that "gloom could turn to hope when children felt able to act rather than merely comply" and, as stated in your article, "where schools had started engaging children with global and local realities aspects of their education they were noticeably more upbeat". This mirrors evidence emerging from over 200 schools participating in Unicef's Rights-Respecting Schools award scheme. The scheme uses children's rights (as enshrined in the UN convention) as the basis for enhancing the school ethos. Rights and respect are embedded in the school's entire philosophy, providing a shared set of values upon which an active school community can be built.



EXECUTIVE MBA PROGRAMS
JOIN US FOR AN INFO SESSION



Columbia Business School
AT THE VERY CENTER OF BUSINESS™
EXECUTIVE MBA

> REGISTER NOW

Today's best video



Sick chicken: what you need to know and what the government won't tell you

We reveal conditions inside the chicken factories that supply the biggest supermarket and fast-food chains

While still in its infancy, the scheme is delivering impressive results: improvements in children's wellbeing including self-esteem, behaviour and relationships, enhanced moral development, positive attitudes towards diversity in society and overall improvement in attendance, learning and academic standards.

David Bull

Executive director, Unicef UK

Why are we so surprised by the findings of the Cambridge study? Ever since testing began in 1992, those professionally concerned with teaching children have been warning about the consequences. More recently parents have added their voices as they saw the stress created in their children. I argued in discussions prior to my retirement from primary headship in 2002 that the disturbing and disruptive behaviour of pupils noted by many in the secondary phase of education bore a direct correlation to the increasing stress experienced by them in the primary years. Postman and Weingartner began their book *The Disappearance of Childhood* with the words "Children are messages we send to a time we may not visit." We have forgotten that and are poorer for our lack of vision.

Chris McDonnell

Little Haywood, Staffordshire

At my primary school, in the 1950s, we had examinations every term in reading, composition, spelling, writing and arithmetic. The average class size was 44. Were we stressed? Probably. We also had the spectre of the 11-plus. So what has happened since? The world is more materialistic and parents have more pressure on them. Has the quality of teachers improved? I don't think so; they are still competent but react more to the stress put upon them. I fear that this stress is transmitted to the pupils. The key paragraph was that about adults voicing concerns over the influence of the media on children, the pressure of consumerism and the breakdown of family life and community. Can we sometimes, please, have a bit more positive press about children? And stop whingeing about testing.

David Weston

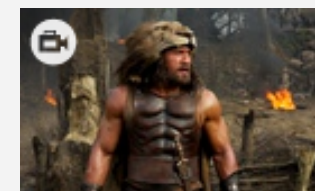
Stevenage, Hertfordshire



How to wear 50s jeans

Jess Cartner-Morley finds a selection for your wardrobe

14 comments



Dwayne Johnson on Hercules

Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson, Ian McShane and Irina Shayk talk about re-making the

Hercules legend

53 comments



Rare leopard cubs born at zoo

Two Amur leopard cubs minutes after birth at Twycross zoo, Leicestershire

[Unauthorized use of ad tag](#)

More from the guardian

Courtney Love considering host of 'new Brad Pitts' for lead role in Cobain biopic 24 Jul 2014

Ask a grown-up: why do we have two nostrils? 19 Jul 2014

George RR Martin donates \$10,000 to UK wolf charity following 13-year-old's pocket money plea 24 Jul 2014

Baseball and burglary: readers' pictures of life in South Korean cities 21 Jul 2014

Eve Branson: 'I was not saved by Kate Winslet!' 20 Jul 2014

More from around the web

Promoted content by Outbrain

Worst Things to Buy at Trader Joe's (Kiplinger)

If You're Using Gmail, You'll Hate You Didn't Know About This Sooner (Production Sawy)

5 Phrases You Should Never Put On Your Resume (Monster)

7 Proven Ways To Get People To Reply To Your Emails (Yesware)

iPad Tips and Tricks (lynda.com)

Recommended by Outbrain

Columbia Business School
AT THE VERY CENTER OF BUSINESS

EXECUTIVE MBA PROGRAMS
JOIN US FOR AN INFO SESSION

[REGISTER NOW](#)

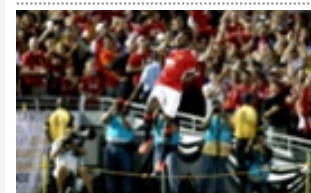
Ads by Google

Nursing School Online

On the Guardian

Most viewed | Latest

Last 24 hours



1. **Football:** Manchester United hammer LA Galaxy as Van Gaal's reign starts with bang

2. **World:** Arizona murderer Joseph Wood dies almost two hours after execution begins

3. **World:** Revealed: the dirty secret of the UK's poultry industry

4. **World:** Sick chicken: what you need to know and what the government won't tell you – video

5. **World:** Indian boy has 232 teeth removed

[More most viewed](#)

Sponsored feature



Enter to win 2 tickets to see A Delicate Balance on Broadway!

Earn Your RN To BSN in 3 Semesters. Online, Affordable & User Friendly!

www.chamberlain.edu

Ready to be a Pastor?

Earn a Degree in Pastoral Studies At Home! Take the First Step Today.

www.christianeducation.com

6 Stocks to Hold Forever

These 6 stocks put your retirement portfolio ahead of the income game.

wealthyretirement.com/Retirement

[License/buy our content](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Terms of service](#) | [US advertising](#) | [A - Z index](#) | [About us](#)

© 2014 Guardian News and Media Limited or its affiliated companies. All rights reserved.