
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

News Report

Experimental schools



In the 1970s, many **experimental** schools appeared all over Britain. Lessons were not **compulsory** in these schools, and there were no timetables, no rules, and no uniforms. The pupils, not the teachers, made the decisions. These free schools had a **reputation** for being **anarchic**.

Maureen Breen started attending a free school in Liverpool in 1971.

"We used to go in and the teachers would say 'what do you want to do today'? We'd never **pick** lessons. We used to go to the zoo or **the pictures**."

While she was a pupil at the Scotland Road Free School, Maureen cannot remember doing any lessons at all. Her teachers tried to persuade her to take some exams, but she refused. Instead, she enjoyed cooking, and she used to make huge **pans** of soup for the other children. So when she was 16, she left school and worked as a **caterer**.

However, she had no qualifications, no exam results, none of the pieces of paper which help people to get better jobs. So she went back to college to study for exams in maths and English.

Today, Maureen has a more **conventional** life. She is married with three children, and lives in a **neat** house in Liverpool. She works as a secretary for the National Health Service.

None of the Scotland Road kids became millionaires. However, many ex-pupils say they learned important life skills while at the school.

Vocabulary

experimental

based on new or untested ideas

compulsory

something which must happen, because of a rule

reputation

the opinion which people generally have about something or someone

anarchic

without rules, order, or control

pick

choose

the pictures

an old-fashioned way to say 'the cinema'

pan

a pot for cooking things in

caterer

a person or company that makes food for groups of people

conventional

normal, ordinary, or traditional

neat

tidy and well-organised

This story is based on an original BBC News story:

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