

AS SEEN
ON
TV

**5 REASONS
WHY MOST SCHOOLS
FAIL YOUR CHILD
WITH
SPECIAL NEEDS**

*..and what you can
do about it*

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5 Reasons Why Most Schools Fail Your Child With Special Needs

**What You Can Do About It
And
How To Join The #WarriorMums**

By Soli Lazarus

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Disclaimer

There is no deliberate intention to discredit any professional, school or institution in this publication. All names have been changed to protect identity and confidentiality.

Dedication

To Styx who supports me and inspires me every day.

To David and Rosie who make me smile and make me proud.

Who Is This Book Aimed At?

I have written this mainly for parents or carers who are struggling on a daily basis. Battling with schools and the 'system'. Mums (and of course dads) with children with special needs who have had to become warriors.

I hope too that professionals will read this and get inspired. And who knows - maybe I'll get my book seen all the way in Parliament where some real change could happen.

Contents

Who Is This Book Aimed At?.....	i
Introduction - The System Is Broken.....	iv
How To Use This Book:	xi
Peer Groups Are Lumped Together	1
Creativity Is Stifled.....	17
Schools Can Damage Our Children’s Emotional And Mental Health	27
Targets Matter Too Much.....	45
There’s A Real World Out There.....	53
Conclusion - Together We Can Bring About Change	63
About The Author	69
Resources Available From Yellow Sun.....	71
Connect With Yellow Sun.....	72
References	73



Introduction - The System Is Broken

School.

What does that word conjure up for you?

For me, school was a happy place.

I am still in touch with many of my school friends some 50 years later and that makes me smile. My memories of my primary school are vivid. It was a big, old Victorian building where I walked from home on my own, going via the sweet shop and buying Bazooka Joes and Black Jacks for one penny.

Girls and boys had their separate entrances and played on separate playgrounds. Boys football, girls skipping. (I grew up in a different non-pc world). We hung upside down on monkey bars over a concrete carpet. The staffroom was a pit of smoke with teachers laughing and chattering. If you dared to knock on the Headmaster's door you would be greeted by a stern nod and a mumble. We cowered away from the witch who lived in the house overlooking our playground.

In the classroom, teachers were plonked at their desks with a snake of children queuing quietly for attention. We piled into the hall where we would all watch 'Tom's Midnight Garden' on a tiny television that was stored in a cabinet on wheels. Highlight for me was Junior Disco Club on a Friday lunchtime where we were allowed to wear our flares. Wahoo! I loved school.

Fast forward to my experience as a parent.

My son has ADHD and his primary school experience was a stark contrast to mine. He was in constant trouble and in his own words felt "lonely and isolated, left out and miserable". He would always be by himself in the playground and would fabricate reasons why he had to go the Medical Room just so he wouldn't be alone.

He was also a very angry little boy. He would steal from people's pencil cases just to get attention. How sad is that? On top of that he took medication, which in hindsight didn't suit him either (I know it suits some so I am not anti-medication). Stage one he felt high as a kite; stage 2 he felt like a zombie. He was 'statemented' which meant he had a support assistant. Years later we

found out that although she was wonderful and got him through academically, he absolutely hated it as she was like a shadow and a constant reminder that he was different. He had no friends, no birthday parties, no play dates.

And me? I'd stand in the playground at the end of the day watching my little boy come out, head down, bedraggled, on his own. Invariably I'd be called over to speak to the teacher about another 'incident'. The other parents didn't want to know me either. Having a son with special needs was obviously infectious. They didn't want to catch anything. So like my son, I was excluded from coffee mornings and social nights out. It was tough for us all.

And now?

School for me is where I have spent my whole adult working life. For 30 years I have been a primary class teacher and now teaching mainly children with special needs. I am an Inclusion Specialist and Assistant Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) in a large primary school in London. Over the years I've seen systems change and then come full circle back to

the beginning again. Go figure. Governments have come and gone with their crazy and sometimes innovative ideas.

I've had to teach myself how to use the new-fangled interactive white board without my stress levels going through the ceiling. I've worked with some incredible people who are extremely dedicated to their profession. I've had some wonderful experiences over the many years; I've taught so many beautiful children and laughed and cried. I've witnessed the gorgeous moments when a child 'gets it' and I've experienced the lows of supporting vulnerable children from abusive backgrounds. We've been on brilliant educational trips, the most rewarding and memorable are residential school journeys where children who are trapped in the classroom feel liberated and blossom as leaders and free thinkers.

I love what I do.

But not all of what I do.

This book will highlight the frustrations I feel about a system which to me at times seems broken. There are so many fabulous aspects to our system - external