

### CLARIFICATION

Sir, — Resultant of the surge in public response to my recent comments apropos the comprehensive scheme, I feel that I am compelled to clarify my opinions for the benefit of those who misinterpreted them of late, and felt an inherent duty to leap to the defence of headmaster, staff, and Chichester High School.

Mr. and Mrs. Gibbons, who so deplored my article, wrote in the Observer that they could only praise the work done by Mr. Watkins, that their son had four Latin periods a week, and that I should surely appreciate the help that I have received since the school has been of a comprehensive nature.

As the subject of Latin was the only one of these topics that I actually mentioned in my letter, I shall deal with this first. I am well aware that Latin is still taught in the school, but the whole point of my mentioning that Latin is on the point of disappearance is that had the schools which joined to form the comprehensive unit remained separate entities, then one more subject would have been available to those that wanted to study it. In place of this, as a single master has to teach right from sixth form standard to the basics of reading and writing, the subject will eventually be dropped as specialist teaching staff are replaced by staff more able to cope with the wider range of education.

Although totally unconnected with the matter in hand, I must say that I fully appreciate the great deal of assistance which I personally have received since the school has been comprehensive, but this was by no means made available because the school is comprehensive. Each upper sixth former would now be

studying for five A levels, and not three if it were not for new comprehensive policy.

As members of staff now have to teach over the full range of academic and practical standards of pupils, it is a task that has not been rivalled in the history of education. Once again, I did not mention staff now present at the school, but I am in a good position to realize that they must be given all the support which they deserve for working in such unfavourable circumstances.

Several people have pointed to school teams and clubs as proof of the success of comprehensive education, and yet I feel that they are forgetting that although school societies may have slightly increased in number they have by no means doubled, as indeed the size of the school has.

I have not before passed comment on the discipline within the school, but I feel sure that were parents aware of the behaviour during school hours — often in full view of staff — then many would take a very different view of the situation. Laxity with regard to discipline has led to a total breakdown of the prefect system, and as the once dreaded impositions and detentions, after school hours, are paid no heed, there remains little point in imposing any punishment.

In the past it has always been safest to assert dominance from the topmost level, and now it is proving a hard lesson to realize that discipline will not maintain itself.

It is a hard truth that with the removal of tradition — the absence of sports day, school magazines, prize-giving, and speech day to name but a few of the items now missing from the calendar — results in all fields are declining, and instead of the pride once evident throughout the school there comes a flow of excuses and explanations as to why things have not turned out the way it was hoped.

I, for one, will always be grateful for the chance I was given when I joined the school seven years ago. I only hope that things will get better, as I now believe they will, for those who have only been at the school two or three years and perhaps are in a lesser position to appreciate what the change has meant.

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