is best for others. We often think that 'we,' and not 'they,' have the answers.

Not that we can take for granted that this 'irreversible' social change is actually taking place. There is much evidence to suggest that British schools are actually quite well run, disciplined and safe. Sure there are difficult schools, where staff and pupils feel intimidated and threatened. They cannot function effectively in a way that allows them to both give and receive the education to which we say they are entitled, but these schools are in a minority.

High level violence is rare, and in being rare, it gets reported. What frustrates teachers more than anything is the low level stuff that disrupts lessons and causes unnecessary negativity in the learning relationships they have with the pupils in their class. Much evidence can be found to support the suggestion that there has been a significant increase in such problematic behaviour over the last few decades, and many reasons have been put forward to 'explain' this rise.

Our family structures here have changed dramatically with fewer two-parent families, declining positive male influences and usually Grandma lives over on the other side of the country.

Parents today are less authoritarian and 'negotiate' rather than tell their children what is expected of them. Children have 'rights,' and we make sure that they know what their rights are. "You can't tell me what to do" is a phrase we hear with some regularity in our playgrounds and social spaces.

Some blame the declining respect for teachers on the demise of corporal punishment, whilst teachers blame parents for failing to support them in school, and for failing to instil in children a basic respect for others. They seek, and we provide, instant gratification.

Sport and outdoor adventure has given way to DVDs and computer games. Children seem happier interacting with images on a screen than with their friends and siblings.

We, as parents, seem to have less time to spend with our offspring these days. Mum has to work of course, because we are now worried about what will happen when we become economically inactive and our paltry pensions can no longer support the lifestyle to which we have become accustomed. So we too 'flop' at the end of the day and plug ourselves into the latest electronic entertainment, which sets an example that our children will inevitably follow. They will play with their

Continued: **Scotland**/ pg 6



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