

Being yourself

Be true to yourself

Various props are required. Pupils are prepared beforehand.

Lately, I've got a bit fed-up with the amount of lost property that's being left around the school so this morning we're going to have a grand clear-out and try to get rid of it. Some of this stuff may not comply with the school rules. I'll leave it to the headmaster to decide if he wants to take any action! (produce a large bag).

Pupil involvement

Now I'm going to hold up various items from this bag that have been found in school and if you recognise anything of yours, put your hand up and come forward to collect it (prior to this, arrange for some confident pupils to come forward as each item is announced).

[One at a time, take out of the bag a number of items which would not be considered 'cool' for a teenager to own, describe them and hand them back to their 'owners' as they come forward.] Examples:

There's a hat here (it's a tea cosy. The 'claimant' could be a senior girl who is known for her interest in fashion).

There's a sombrero (the 'claimant' could be a short, younger boy).

There's a baby cup (the 'claimant' could be a senior pupil or even a teacher).

There's a pair of Long Johns (the 'claimant' could be a senior girl).

There's a signed photograph of Dame Vera Lynn (the 'claimant' could be a pupil who is known for his/her enthusiasm for heavy rock music).

There's a pair of pink frilly knickers here (the 'claimant' could be a senior rugby-playing boy).

There's a bottle of scent here (open it and sniff). *Well, that's the sort of thing that would drive me crazy if I had too much of it, I'm sure!* (the 'claimant' could be a senior girl who is known to have had boyfriends).

There's a large string vest here (the 'claimant' could be a small but confident younger girl).

There's a book called 'How to be a Car Mechanic' (the 'claimant' could be a petite senior girl).

There's a men's grooming kit. Let's see. It includes a small pair of scissors, a pair of tweezers to get rid of unwanted hair, a comb, something for pushing the cuticles back and a mirror (the 'claimant' could be a younger boy who is sometimes a bit scruffy).

There's a pair of reindeer antlers (the 'claimant' could be a pupil known to be rather serious and studious).

There's a copy of a 'Telly-Tubbies' annual (the claimant could be a Sixth Former or even, perhaps, a member of staff).

There's a book called 'The Theory of Relativity' by Albert Einstein (the 'claimant' could be a younger pupil who is known to be not academic but who is, nevertheless, liked and regarded as characterful).

The message

Actually, as you've probably guessed, this was a put up job. None of those items really belonged to the people who claimed them! They all agreed to pretend that they were the owners (stress this). You must have realised fairly early on that it wasn't likely that they were the real owners . . . except for the scent bottle perhaps!

We all have our own personalities and interests and we are all different. It takes a lot of guts to be, say, a fan of Vera Lynn and to admit to it when most of your friends are interested in completely different music.

Being a teenager is often a confusing period in your life because, on the one hand, you want to belong and not appear different but, on the other hand, you want to be yourself and discover who you really are. I hope that you don't always feel that you have to follow the crowd. I hope you feel you can be yourself and are not frightened to be a bit different from everyone else because the most important thing about growing up is to discover who you are as you allow your own interests and personality to develop.

There's one other thing. Don't forget that, just as you're discovering who you are, others will be discovering who they are. They also have a right to be different so make sure you don't give a hard time to others because you think they're a bit different (I know none of you are bullies!). Be yourself and respect the right of others to be themselves too!