

The Project

The transition from primary to secondary school can be challenging and I was worried about my son Jonny who was small for his age and the youngest in his year group. My fears were unfounded as he rapidly established himself as the class clown. He was not a conscientious student and never had the right textbooks or equipment. He regularly left homework and assignments until the last minute, often handing them in incomplete or late.

We spent his first half term holiday working on a project on Norman castles, visiting Windsor Castle and collecting information leaflets and postcards to illustrate his work. He got a mark of 15/30, under which was written 'I would have marked this higher if you had written about Anglo-Saxon villages as I had asked'.

It was the evening of the last day of the Christmas holiday when Jonny casually revealed that he needed to build a model of a Roman villa to take to school the next day. He quickly reassured me that it would be fine to make something out of Lego and he would get up early the next morning to build a villa. I left early for work and so I didn't see Jonny's offering, and I forgot all about it. A couple of weeks later I was asked to pop in to see Jonny's form tutor. Jonny had been disrupting lessons pretending to have Tourette's. On my way to the classroom I passed a display of models of Roman villas. They were fantastic! Carefully placed mosaic floors, miniature figures in togas, even a cut away floor to show a central heating system below. Then my eye was caught by a featureless Lego oblong. Featureless that is apart from the faces of farm and zoo animals peppered throughout. Jonny had used Lego bricks from an animal set. It was remedial level work. His form tutor Struggled to keep a straight face.

A few weeks later the childminder phoned me at work. Jonny had something to tell me. "Mum, I forgot. I have to do a model of one of the seven wonders of the ancient world by tomorrow." After I had calmed down we decided on the pyramids. I booked the afternoon off work and went home via Hobbycraft. I made Jonny do all the research about the number of pyramids, their relative sizes and their alignment with constellations of stars, and on a large board we reconstructed the entire site, finishing at ten o'clock that night. My husband was commissioned to deliver it by car to the school the next day. Two days later Jonny's form tutor phoned to complain about his behaviour. He had turned up for lessons that afternoon with his underpants on over his trousers, 'for a dare' he'd said. I spluttered my apologies and promised to talk to Jonny about 'boundaries'.

"But on a more positive note", said the form tutor, "Splendid work by Jonny on his model of the pyramids. AND a whole week early!"